

ALASKA NATIVE SCHOLARS: A MIXED METHODS  
INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS INFLUENCING PHD ATTAINMENT

By

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## **Abstract**

This study entitled, “Alaska Native Scholars: A Mixed Methods Investigation of Factors Influencing PhD Attainment,” investigates the contributing factors influencing the attainment of PhD degrees by Alaska Natives. Originating from a cross-section of rural and urban Alaska communities and tribal ethnicities, this group of scholars attended graduate schools throughout the country. Today many of these PhDs work in universities, conduct research, and advocate for Indigenous people in various leadership roles, both in and outside of Alaska. This study’s assumption is these PhD graduates have gained valuable lessons along their path to success and an examination of these factors is relevant to advancing that success.

The findings analyze results from a survey instrument with approximately a 92% response rate from all living Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates that were able to be located at the time, up to early 2015. Survey participants shared personal, demographic, cultural, social, academic, and economic factors both supporting and hindering PhD attainment. Survey data was validated by ten personal interviews with PhDs from eight different Alaska Native tribes. One goal of this study was to increase our knowledge of the circumstances and factors of Alaska Native doctoral graduates and to build upon knowledge necessary to increase interest and enrollment of Alaska Native PhD graduates.

Some questions examined by this study are: What sets of factors do AN PhDs have in common which led to their success? What challenges and barriers are specific to the Alaska Native demographics? If patterns of successful factors exist, can these factors be replicated to expand Alaska Native participation in PhD or other graduate programs? Are there ‘lessons learned’ in terms of aiding university PhD programs in attracting and graduating Alaska Native students?

A stronger PhD representation of this population has implications for leadership, education, business, and policy-making roles serving to increase Indigenous self-determination. Additionally, this research has implications for universities seeking to address gaps in Alaska Native and American Indian faculty representation.

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## **Chapter One: Overview**

This dissertation is entitled, “Alaska Native Scholars: A Mixed Methods Investigation of Factors Influencing PhD Attainment.” It focuses on gaining an understanding of the path Alaska Native PhD graduates took on their road to PhD degree attainment. They candidly share their challenges, successes, and advice to aspiring and current Alaska Native PhD students, as well as universities and agencies seeking to attract, support, and graduate Alaska Native students. This study emphasizes the strategies leading to successful attainment of a PhD, based on the advice and suggestions of the majority of Alaska Native PhDs. Nearly all Alaska Native PhDs participated in this project by responding to a survey, and for some, a personal interview as well. This study assumes there are particular support systems that contribute to successful attainment of a PhD degree for Alaska Native graduate students. Firsthand information was collected from nearly all living Alaska Native PhDs, both within and outside of Alaska, stemming back to the first Alaska Native PhD from 1970 to early 2015.

Alaska Native PhDs’ testimonies will have implications on aspiring and current Alaska Native graduate students as well as institutions seeking to better support and increase numbers of Alaska Native PhD graduates. They also expressed their thoughts on the importance of K-12 education prior to graduate school. This study will contribute to recruitment efforts of Alaska Native graduate students, as universities find effective strategies to retain their Alaska Native students. Lastly, this project assumes agencies will benefit with the study as they seek grants and create programs to support Alaska Native students at the college level and prior to college.

### **1.1 Personal Introduction and Interest in Topic**

My parents met when my mom attended the Mt. Edgecumbe High School boarding school. My mother, Corrine (Sundberg) Brown, was born and raised in Larsen Bay on Kodiak



Island. She is Alutiiq, Russian, German, Norwegian, and Swedish. She moved to Mt. Edgecumbe boarding school at eleven years old. My father, Albert George Nelson was born in Ketchikan and raised in Ketchikan and Annette Island (Metlakatla). He was Tsimshian, Hispanic, and some mixed European ancestry, according to a genetic test. He relocated to Sheldon Jackson High School. He graduated from Sheldon Jackson College with his postsecondary associate degree. My parents married and had four children. They divorced. My father moved out of state with my two older siblings when I was three years old. My mother and supportive stepfather raised my younger brother and me. We grew up in Sitka. As with many Alaska Natives who attended boarding school in their generation, neither of them grew up knowing much about their culture, although my mom and Grandma Edith (Theodosia Aga Sundberg) Swan both had sharp memories with Russian Alutiiq ways of living from Kodiak Island. My grandmother grew up attending a fluent Russian speaking border school on Kodiak Island. Ten years ago, my son Bruce and I experienced an important cultural experience, as we were both adopted into my father's Tsimshian tribal phratry, Gishbudwada (killer whale) in Metlakatla, Alaska. A phratry refers to a specific tribal group. It was quite emotional and contributed to my desire to learn more about our Indigenous ancestry. Our history is important and drives my desire to learn more and support Alaska Native education, along with honoring our ancestors.

I have spent over 30 years working in education as a teacher, coach, and Native education grant administrator. Following my Alaska education career, I taught in the rigorous, highly academic and ethnically diverse Montgomery County Public School District in the Maryland/Metro DC area for two years. Through these experiences I have gained a firsthand understanding of Indigenous and multicultural education, which complemented my Indigenous

Studies PhD program. This research program enhanced my knowledge in best teaching practices, our educational system, our Alaska Native students, Alaska Native PhDs, and myself.

As an experienced, lifelong educator, there is room for improvement with sharing Alaska Native knowledge and Alaska Native researchers, leaders, and educators can contribute to that need. From personal experience of working with many southeast Alaska Native elders in numerous camps, many of those elders have since passed on, and with them invaluable, undocumented knowledge for most of them. Educators are fortunate to have elders work with students in the classroom and at camps, but more often than not, their knowledge is oral and not often available beyond the camps. It is on occasion, with permission, but many of their stories and Indigenous knowledge goes with them. We can do a better job of researching, retaining, applying, and sharing our local traditional knowledge, whether it is from elders, culture bearers, or Alaska Native researchers or PhDs. My project focused on having Alaska Native PhDs share their knowledge, experience, and wisdom so that students are inspired and motivated to pursue more postsecondary education.

I spent eight summers as a cultural coordinator for Alaska Native Student Wisdom Enrichment Retreat (ANSWER) Camp, which was an annual summer Native science camp for 80 rural middle school students from all over Alaska. In the summer of 2008, the camp director was recording and sharing elders and guest speaker presentations to the students. She recorded me talking to students at one of our daily gatherings. A decade ago, I was not pursuing a PhD degree. However, I had a passion for my research topic before envisioning being in a PhD program. The literacy leader quoted me talking to ANSWER Camp students:

We need to ‘grow our own.’ Get a college degree so that you can have a voice to contribute to decisions that affect us. We should be in [leadership] roles in businesses and

corporations that affect us. We can be part of the team that makes science decisions affecting our land and our resources now and in our future. Let our educated and knowledgeable voices be heard.

This talk addressed my interest in youth advocacy and the importance of higher education so that Alaska Native students could push themselves academically and learn to have a voice.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Indigenous Studies PhD program has been a natural progression of research and inquiry following my teaching and administrative career. To date, this educational journey in this doctoral program has included coursework involving numerous readings, colleague interaction, professor mentorships, Indigenous guest speakers and authors sharing their worldviews. The PhD professors, candidates, and peer students have been passionate and inspirational.

I asked myself, “How can I be more effective, particularly with my Alaska Native students?” This addressed a similar question I had when I was teaching in Maryland’s Montgomery County Public Schools in 2008-10. We had many specific strategies to address our extremely diverse population of students.

More Alaska Native scholars should pursue a doctoral degree, particularly if they want to ‘be heard’ when advocating for change and self-governance in business, educational leadership, and policy-making. Other Indigenous groups such as the Native Hawai‘ians, New Zealand’s Māori, and Canadian First Nations people, have sizeable PhD graduate populations for us to strive for.

## **1.2 Rationale for Research**

My dissertation is entitled, “Alaska Native Scholars: A Mixed Methods Study of Factors Influencing PhD Attainment.” Throughout this paper, when I refer to doctoral graduates, it

includes philosophy doctorates (PhD) and education doctorates (EdD) graduates. When I use the term PhD in this paper, I am including EdD graduates as well. There are far fewer EdD graduates, but many universities happen to have more PhD programs. An example of an EdD program is the Ivy League school, Harvard University, which has several Alaska Native EdD graduates in Anthropology and Education. I will use ‘doctoral graduates’ intermittently with ‘PhD’. When I refer to UAF’s PhD program, it is specifically a PhD program, not an EdD program. There is a critical need to increase the number of highly credentialed Alaska Native graduates to shape Alaska’s workforce and proportionally influence Alaska’s political institutions. Increasing the range of Alaska Native education degrees will likely contribute to positive change, increase self-determination, improve relevant place-based education, and promote self-governance. My goal is to earn a PhD degree, focusing on relevant research contributions arising from my study. Another goal I have is to increase the number of Alaska Native PhD graduates.

Alaska Native education continues to be a topic of high interest in Alaska. Given grim reports on low student test scores, low graduation rates, and suicide rates among Alaska Native youth, effective education across all age levels is vital in the world of Alaska Native academia. Having more Alaska Native leaders involved in the development of educational curricula and assessments can be a proactive measure to increase performance of Alaska Native youth. Increasing the number of Alaska Native PhDs would likely benefit all age levels of Alaska Native students and school programs. In 2005, National Education Association (NEA) leaders, along with the assistance of the Alaska Native/American Indian Caucus, published a revealing report. It stated some distressing data on Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) students:

In 2003, 15 percent of Native youths 16- to 24-years old had not completed high school or earned a G.E.D. credential. This rate was more than twice the rate for white youths (6 percent), four times that of Asian American/Pacific Islanders (AA/PI) (4 percent) and about the same as Black youths. Only Hispanic students dropped out at rates higher than AI/AN students. Persistence to graduation is difficult for students who are not achieving at high levels. AI/AN students, like other students, get discouraged when they are unable to feel success in their schoolwork. Native students generally score lower than white or AA/PI students in both reading and math in the fourth and eighth grades. (Trujillo & Alston, 2005, p. 2)

Emphasis on Alaska Native postsecondary education is a proactive asset-based measure to promote a pathway to academic success with Alaska Native students and people. Although much emphasis tends to be towards PreK-12 education, postsecondary momentum has been increasing over the past few years among several international Indigenous groups. Indigenous people are making progress towards self-determination in education, business, Indigenous studies and other fields, as these populations earn undergraduate and graduate degrees at postsecondary education institutions. At the first Alaska Native Studies Conference (ANSC), sponsored by the University of Alaska colleges, the keynote speaker, New Zealand Māori professor, Dr. Graham Hingangaroa Smith (2013) stated, there will be “deaf ears until you have a PhD”. Smith advocates self-determination through the advancement of graduate education, with the goal of having Indigenous groups continue to research, publish, present, and be advocates for their people.

Similarly, as the number of Alaska Native PhDs increase, there will be a more concerted effort towards Indigenous research, success, and self-determination for Alaska Native people. Attaining a PhD is a sign of dedication, tenacity, resilience, and the willingness to master a field.

This topic has great potential significance, as it may guide those Alaska Natives considering a PhD degree or universities seeking to serve a more proportionally representative graduate student population. A necessary step towards that goal is to get a more precise understanding of contributing factors and variables of all Indigenous graduates, particularly Alaska Native PhD graduates. An increased number of Alaska Native PhD graduates will support the need for more Alaska Native voices, Indigenous perspective, and documented research by Alaska Natives in various fields of academia, business, and policy making.

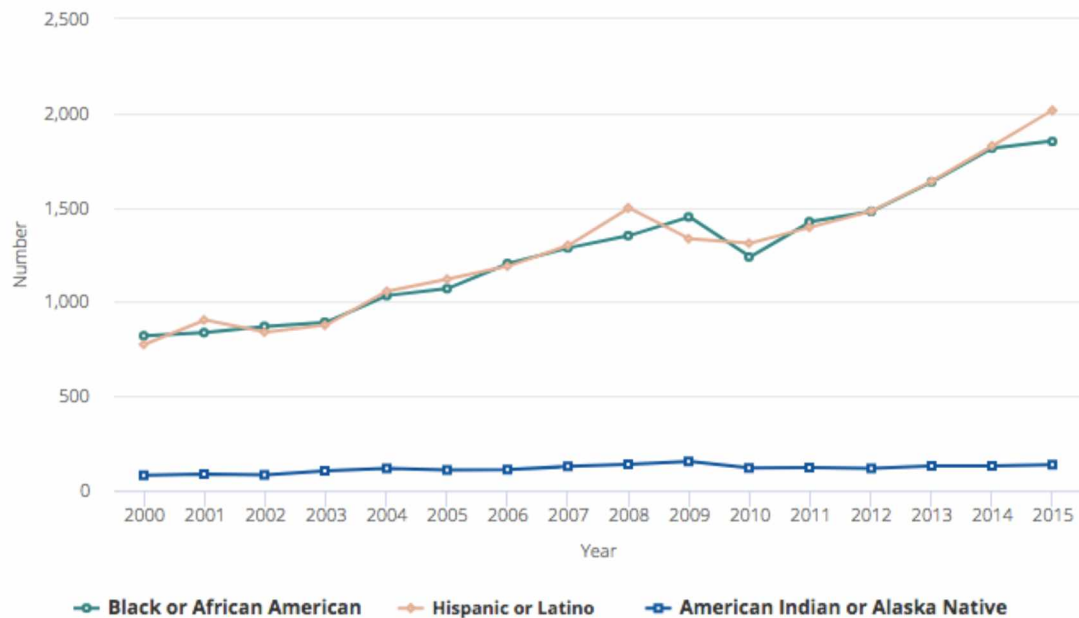
### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

It is critical to understand the multiple factors that may contribute to Alaska Natives' low participation in PhD programs in all academic disciplines. It is important to examine the potentially common factors present in 70 Alaska Natives who have succeeded in ultimately attaining their doctorate degrees. My research hypothesizes that this information holds great value for addressing the low demographic population of Alaska Native PhDs.

Alaska Native PhDs are rare and Alaska Natives are significantly underrepresented as a proportion of PhD graduates to the general population (by ethnicity) or when compared with Indigenous populations in other locations such as Hawai'i or New Zealand.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) released a January 2018 web report that shows an increase in doctoral degrees, "The number and the proportion of doctoral degrees in S&E [Science and Engineering] fields earned by underrepresented minorities increased between 2000 and 2015....American Indians and Alaska Natives earned 137—together accounting for 9% of all S&E doctoral degrees awarded that year, up from 6% in 2000" (NSF, n.d.). Figure 1.1 shows Alaska Native and American Indians doctoral attainment numbers have increased from 2000-2015, as NSF shows below:

**S&E doctoral degrees earned by U.S. citizen and permanent resident underrepresented minorities, by race and ethnicity: 2000–15**



**Figure 1.1: Recent data showing 15-year span of earned minority doctorates.**

*National Science Foundation, National Center for Education Statistics data*

*(<https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2018/nsb20181/report/sections/higher-education-in-science-and-engineering/graduate-education-enrollment-and-degrees-in-the-united-states>)*

A web-based published report by Education Trust (2013) shared startling academic data from grades 4, 8, high school, and college level of Alaska Natives, Hawai‘ian Natives, and American Indians. This data was provided by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2013). The public school data for Alaska Native/American Indians indicates declining educational success, while the college data seems to have remained constant. The Education Trust (2013) study states 54% of Alaska Native/American Indian high school graduates went on to college in 2004, compared to 75% of white students (p. 10). Of those numbers, 39% of our Alaska Native/American Indian students graduated with a bachelor’s

degree by 2010, compared to 69% of white students who enrolled in that same year of 2004 (p. 11). Awareness of these statistics from public schools through postsecondary would benefit Alaska Natives, Native Hawai‘ians, and American Indians. As the Education Trust (2013) document states, “We hope that these data will help spark much needed conversation and action to ensure that we, as a nation, reverse these trends” (p. 3).

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Alaska Native PhD graduates have completed their PhD degree and have messages to share with Alaska Native PhD graduate students and advice to universities and other agencies looking to recruit and provide supports to aspiring and current Alaska Native PhD students. Resilience is “...the ability to bounce back from adversity” (Strand & Peacock, 2002, p. 1). In the Strand and Peacock study (2012), people who were resilient overcame barriers, with support from family, extended family, schools and community members that helped them. They came back stronger. Even with failures in school and life stress they did not give up (Jones, 2006, p.18). If so, what were some examples of resiliency? How important were relationships and support networks?

Questions examined in this study are: What sets of factors do Alaska Native PhDs have in common which led to their success? What challenges and barriers are specific to the Alaska Native demographic? If patterns of successful factors exist, can these factors be replicated to expand Alaska Native participation in PhD or other graduate programs? Are there ‘lessons to be learned’ in terms of aiding university PhD programs in attracting and graduating Alaska Native students?

There were 70 identified PhDs at the end of my data collection period. Of those, six were deceased. The findings provide examples of the resilience of these graduates.



My 2006 master's thesis project was entitled, "Research on Motivational Factors Contributing Toward Alaska Native Student Success in Secondary Schools" (Jones, 2006). This work included 153 interviews from a mix of mostly Alaska Native secondary students and some of their peers, along with documents from my review of the literature. The results of my 2006 study led to questions regarding motivational contributors of postsecondary level Alaska Native graduates. Alaska Native secondary students from the study also valued and were motivated by teachers with whom they developed relationships. I shared in the study: "An extremely critical piece in motivating Alaska Native students is the relationship with their teachers. Close relationships are an action step that is pertinent in teachers developing a relationship with the Alaska Native students" (Jones, 2006, p. 96).

Some of the ways teachers developed relationships with their students was from relationship building at the beginning of the year, and after the relationship was built, being frank and having heart to heart talks with students individually (Jones, 2006, p. 49).

### **1.5 Project Contribution to the Field**

Findings from the literature review, a well-tailored survey instrument, and personal interviews were compiled and interpreted in later sections of this research. I anticipated this research would benefit and potentially serve to motivate undergraduate and graduate Alaska Native students, as well as other Indigenous students and researchers. There is some powerful testimony regarding resilience, relationships, cultural connectedness, and various types of support systems that have emerged from my review of the literature and the collected research data.

Results of this research will provide supportive tools, hope, inspiration, and motivation to current and future Alaska Native postsecondary students, as well as advocacy and a useful

baseline for other Indigenous researchers. Universities seeking to increase support and advocacy for Alaska Native students will benefit from this research, as they will be more informed with how to support and graduate Alaska Native graduate students. The intended outcome will be more informed rural and urban Alaska Native graduate students who will be able to play more important roles in leadership positions at the decision-making tables, as well as conduct research for Alaska Native people by Alaska Native people. This research supports Barnhardt's longstanding efforts. Barnhardt (2008b) stated:

One of the most persistent constraints in fulfilling those aspirations is for Indigenous peoples to be recognized as having the qualifications and expertise to be valued partners in the research and policy-making process. The strategy to overcome those constraints has focused on the preparation of Indigenous scholars who have a high level of research and policy expertise and an in-depth understanding of the dynamics at the interface between Indigenous knowledge systems and western institutions. (p. 2)

An increased number of Alaska Native PhDs will have positive benefits in areas outside of academia as well. Alaska Native advocacy, whether it be sitting at a leadership table or in research arenas will benefit Alaska's Indigenous peoples.

### **1.6 Impact of the Development of the Indigenous Studies Program**

There are several existing manuscripts addressing and supporting the need for Alaska Natives in higher education and specifically the benefit of their attaining PhD degrees. Given the diminutive statistics of Alaska Native student success, the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) took a proactive approach when creating the Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN) several decades ago. This global education hub and database continues to serve and promote

Indigenous knowledge, education and self-determination for Alaska Native people and other Indigenous groups around the world.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks' Indigenous Studies PhD program plays a vital role in increasing the graduation rates of Alaska Native PhD students. Its foundation began as a vision of Dr. Ray Barnhardt, Dr. Oscar Kawagley, Frank Hill, Andy Hope, and numerous other educators and leaders in Alaska. The primary advocates were based out of UAF and some members of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI) committee. UAF's Indigenous Studies PhD program formally emerged in 2008, after several years of intense research and promotion leading up to the long-anticipated unveiling. Other researchers from outside of Alaska and even the United States were known to be instrumental to the development of this graduate program.

From the outset, the structure and mentoring within UAF's Indigenous Studies PhD program was expected to be a critical factor in student success. PhD students enter the program at different times, allowing for veteran cohorts of students helping new students. Some of the ways they do this are by collaborating in state, national, and international seminars and courses, formal and informal audio conferences, and email/multimedia communications.

"UAF's PhD program is unique in that it breaks down barriers of access" for Alaska Native people, as stated by University of California Davis' Dena'ina Athabascan professor, Dr. Perea (personal communication, July 15, 2013). She also stated, "It is uniquely positioned to get advanced degrees" with their distance education PhD program (Perea, personal communication, July 15, 2013). As a current UAF Indigenous Studies PhD student, I can attest to that personally.

Some of the goals of UAF's Indigenous Studies PhD program that are relevant to my research topic include the following (from the UAF Indigenous Studies website):

- To provide the programmatic infrastructure for advanced, in-depth, interdisciplinary graduate studies and research in academic fields related to the role of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing in the contemporary world;
- To prepare graduates who are capable of conducting basic and applied research on social, political, educational, economic and cultural issues of concern to people and communities in the circumpolar north, with a particular emphasis on Alaska;
- To expand the pool of knowledgeable and highly skilled Alaskans who can assume leadership and technical positions with public and private sector organizations, including universities, school districts, social service agencies, Native corporations, tribal governments, and state and federal agencies in Alaska and beyond. (2013)

Several studies on Indigenous issues in higher education pertain to my research topic, two of which included UAF professor, Dr. Ray Barnhardt as a co-author. The first study I examined was an early publication. It provided information on the critical need for more Alaska Natives in higher education. Kirkness & Barnhardt (1991) stated:

We need to recognize that there can be many reasons for pursuing a university education, reasons which often transcend the interest and well-being of the individual student. For First Nations communities and students, a university education can be seen as important for any of the following reasons:

- It can be seen as a means of realizing equality and sharing in the opportunities of the larger society in which we live.
- It can be seen as a means for collective social and economic mobility.

- It can be seen as a means of overcoming dependency and “neo-colonialism”.
- It can be seen as a means of engaging in research to advance the knowledge of First Nations.
- It can be seen as a means of providing the expertise and leadership needed by First Nations communities.
- It can be seen as a means to demystify mainstream culture and learn the politics and history of racial discrimination. (p. 3)

Barnhardt (2008b) stated that Native people have historically been the subjects of research rather than composing it and sharing it themselves. He indicated:

Native peoples in Alaska have usually been the subjects of research rather than the ones responsible for conducting it. However, the role of Alaska Natives in research is changing due to a concerted effort on the part of the University of Alaska and Native people themselves to develop new programs aimed at recruiting and preparing Native scholars in all academic fields who can take on leadership roles and bring an Indigenous perspective to the policy arenas at the local, state, national and international levels. (p. 1)

Barnhardt has been a central force advocating for and creating a PhD program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. With decades of researching and gathering data and testimony in support of more Alaska Native PhD graduates, Barnhardt and Kawagley state its importance:

Native people may need to understand Western society, but not at the expense of what they already know and the way they have come to know it. Non-Native people, too, need to recognize the coexistence of multiple worldviews and knowledge systems, and find ways to understand and relate to the world in its multiple dimensions and varied perspectives. (2005a, p. 9)

Alaska Native involvement with non-Native decision makers and with research is imperative. Capacity building in the graduate arena is critical for advocacy of Indigenous knowledge, Alaska's resources, and Alaska Native education. Barnhardt made a strong case for this, as he recognized the important worldview and research of Kawagley:

Most critical in that regard for purposes of bringing Indigenous knowledge out of the shadows in Alaska was the seminal scholarly work of Angayuqaq whose research revolutionized our understanding of the role of Indigenous world views and ways of knowing and their relevance to contemporary matters (Kawagley, 1995).

Kawagley worked in tandem with Barnhardt for decades. Kawagley was another critical driving force with growth of Alaska Native education programs. In one of Barnhardt and Kawagley's (2010) most recent publications, Kawagley commented: "Our educational mission is to produce human beings at home in their place, their environment, their world. This is slowly being brought to fruition through the effort of the Native people themselves, with support from others of like thinking" (p. xiv). Kawagley still plays a critical role in the efforts of moving Alaska Native knowledge and research forward, even after he has passed on.

There is a growing need and demand for more research and advocacy towards Indigenous knowledge systems in many educational, institutional, and leadership settings. We have a plethora of resources and people that have laid the groundwork for Alaska Native Knowledge

curriculum and content. These resources have been created and compiled from stellar teams of elders, educators, Indigenous leaders, and Native knowledge advocates (Native and non-Native) over the past several decades. One of the resources created was the ‘Sharing Our Pathways’ publication (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2011). The book is a compilation of published materials from 1996-2005, written by mostly Alaska Native authors. The Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI) created this series of published articles as one of their many initiatives, which was one of the actions that set the platform for the Alaska Native knowledge movement. Barnhardt states:

The central systemic reform focus of the AKRSI reform strategy is the fostering of connectivity and complementarity between two functionally interdependent but historically disconnected and alienated complex systems - the Indigenous knowledge systems rooted in the Native cultures that inhabit rural Alaska, and the formal education systems that have been imported to serve the educational needs of rural Native communities. (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2011, p. xi)

Knowledge creates opportunity, leadership, respect, and empowerment for Alaska Native people. A catalyst with the effort to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing into Alaskan public schools was unquestionably was the AKRSI, which began in 1995. Several of the leaders in the AKRSI and Alaska Native knowledge movement are no longer living so it is imperative that we continue down the path they have paved for us. We must build upon their knowledge and share our pathways. In this same way, some of the Alaska Native pioneers who broke through the PhD barrier are beginning to age. My research delved into Alaska Native PhD graduates’ firsthand experiences regarding background or educational consistencies, challenges, and successes. They had wisdom to share from their journeys and nearly all living Alaska Native PhDs were willing to share their experiences and/or advice.

## **1.7 Growing our Own: Education is Opportunity**

Alaska Natives attaining PhDs are rare when compared with Indigenous populations such as Native Hawai‘ians or Māoris of New Zealand. The Māori have 500 earned PhDs in five years, according to Dr. Malia Villegas’ 2010 study. University of Hawai‘i professor, Dr. Lilikala Kame‘eleihiwa, stated that 700-800 Native Hawai‘ians have PhD degrees (2013).

As an Alaska Native educator, I understand the importance of encouraging more Alaska Native students to pursue a degree, whether it is an associate degree in a field or encouraging Alaska Native students to pursue a degree beyond their bachelor’s degree. Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005a) acknowledged:

There is a growing appreciation of the contributions that Indigenous knowledge can make to our contemporary understanding in areas such as medicine, resource management, meteorology, biology, and in basic human behavior and educational practices. Yet in order to fully benefit from these contributions, more Indigenous scholars are needed.

(p. 1)

Being credible and educated with a PhD will allow for more research, publication, collaboration of like thinking, and respect. With advanced educational degrees, we can make a difference. Alaska Natives need to increase the number of advanced college degrees to promote positive change. Dr. Byron Mallott, the current Alaskan Lieutenant Governor and honorary PhD recipient, stated in one of his Alaska Federation of Native (2013) speeches: “We need to grow our own and represent ourselves rather than pay outsiders.” At that AFN annual convention he also stated, “...the overall society, the university system allows us to strengthen who we are as people in terms of study, in terms of education, in terms of research, in terms of analysis, in terms of looking over the horizon” (2013).



There was a growing need for capacity building in rural communities. Hearing Indigenous voices and perspectives is critical for the future of the Alaska land and resources, as well as honoring the centuries of Indigenous knowledge of Alaska Native people. My proposed research topic fits this theme by examining how to ‘grow our own’ by increasing relevant Indigenous research by our growing number of Alaska Native scholars.

## **Chapter Two: Review of the Literature: Education is Opportunity**

This chapter presents an examination of existing research, manuscripts, and theory that have bearing on my research. The context is set for the proportionally low participation rates of Alaska Natives in doctoral programs by a review of existing work of some other minority groups. Alaska Native cultures are resilient and have adapted through several stages of educational doctrine imposed upon them by a dominant culture. In recent times there are growing examples of educational self-determination, as Alaska's Indigenous peoples increasingly value and take ownership of both their culture and mastery of Western educational teachings.

A premise underlying this research is "education is opportunity" and that an increasingly higher attainment of education will positively influence Alaska Native society, economics, and culture. To that end, a small focus in the review of the literature contains a theme of education as a path towards self-determination. This approach was consistent with other examinations of educational attainment in some minority populations. Although the body of work focused on researching and reporting on what is known about Alaska Native PhDs, this study is value-laden with the concept that advancing the size of this small subset of the Alaska Native population is worthwhile, and therefore will require structure and support. Examples of that were shared in Chapter One with Barnhardt and Kawagley's work (2005a; 2005b; 2010; 2011). An examination of the educational path of other Indigenous and minority populations provides useful comparisons for understanding the values, barriers, supports, and benefits of Alaska Native PhD graduates.

The literature review examines programs and models that have been successful for graduate students attaining a PhD degree. More specifically, prior research on Indigenous populations that has direct relevance of the study are examined in this research. This framework will set the stage for direct examination of Alaska Native PhDs through a mixed methods research design, which will be described in detail in Chapter Three. The initial research question targets what common factors contribute to doctoral students successfully attaining their PhD degree. ‘Success’ comes in many forms and does not strictly have to be in the world of academia. For purposes of my specific research topic, ‘success,’ refers to students who attain their doctoral degree, although that is not the only notion of success for Alaska Natives.

Review of the literature contributed to finding patterns and common traits that influenced graduate student success amongst various groups. Several of the factors had parallels with successful Alaska Native PhD graduates.

## **2.1 Historical Accounts Leading to Proactive Steps by Indigenous Groups**

Alaska’s Native people have experienced the loss of land, cultural traditions, Indigenous languages, customs, values, self-identity and pride. In the past fifty years, Alaska Native people have been taking a proactive stance. Educational and leadership initiatives have been a factor in overcoming culturally traumatic events. There has been a movement for advancing positive measures towards change and self-determination for Alaska Native people. Although representation of Alaska Natives in education, business, and government have made some improvements in the past fifty years, Alaska Natives continue to be demographically under-represented in business, government, and educational institutions in Alaska.

In the 1960’s, an Iñupiat businessman named John Schaeffer identified the need for more self-determination and autonomy for his people. Schaeffer set out a proactive strategy, “The

Spirit Journey,” designed to empower his tribe. His approach was to travel to towns and neighboring villages delivering frank, honest, emotional speeches to his fellow Iñupiat. The speeches started by recounting the grim socio-economic and educational data of his people (Schaeffer & Christianson, 2010, p. 60). Schaeffer’s ‘tough love’ approach exposed the social, economic, and political inequities, which motivated his people to take action. Schaeffer’s personal campaign gave his fellow Iñupiat a wake-up call, jolting them into seeing their current way of living. He ended his talks with a powerful message to his people: Take action, be empowered, and be the leaders and decision makers of the future. Although Schaeffer unexpectedly passed on early, he laid the foundation for the Iñupiaq self-determination movement, which was the inspiration for tribal sovereignty among other Alaska Native groups in the state. Schaeffer was one of the first Alaska Natives to identify and openly advocate for the central importance of cultural values, later leading to widespread identification of and endorsement of tribal values in the mid 1990s. Schaeffer’s self-determination movement continues to have a great influence across Alaska today with the common themes of: (a) follow tribal values, (b) be proactive, (c) be a voice, (d) take leadership, and (e) be educated. He was a native political advocate for fifty years (Dunham, 2016).

As many Alaska Natives recognize the importance of self-determination, earning a college degree is seen as desirable and is occurring with more frequency among Alaska Natives. Individual opportunity, equality, and true empowerment is strongly linked with education. A college education leads to capacity building for Alaska Native business people, educators, and leaders within the tribes and their institutions. A study by Barnhardt supported this theme. He conveyed: “One of the most salient and significant characteristics of Indigenous higher education institutions is their over-arching sense of commitment to the collective interests of the

Indigenous community with which they are associated” (1993, p. 6). Educational institutions with an Indigenous focus are critical to Alaska Native empowerment. Having a college degree supports building new leadership for tomorrow’s communities and rural school reform efforts.

In one publication, Barnhardt (1985) describes the need for change and self-governance in New Zealand for the Māori people. Barnhardt spent a great length of time with the Māoris in the 80s. He had many cultural awakenings during this period. He stated:

One of the recurrent themes in nearly all of the many recent assessments of Māori social, economic, and educational status is the need for greater Māori involvement in the decision-making areas in New Zealand society, particularly in those arenas that impact Māori people and communities. (Barnhardt, 1985, p. 1)

Increasingly, Alaska Natives have control over their educational system. During this era in the 80s and 90s, Barnhardt worked closely with Yupiaq scholar and leader, Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley. A significant contributing factor with the Native education reform process in Alaska directly transpired from their collaboration and successful efforts. Kawagley had early visions that literally transpired over meals and written on napkins in conversations with his colleagues. He brainstormed and jotted Indigenous philosophical concepts, which eventually served as vital contributions to his dissertation. His concepts emerged and became catalysts in the Alaska Native education reform efforts. Kawagley recognized the need for rejuvenating and strengthening traditional knowledge within Alaska’s Western education institutions. His dissertation stated the urgency of retaining Indigenous knowledge. He wrote, “Unless people on a grass-roots level evaluate their priorities through revitalization of their traditional governments, a way of life will be lost forever” (Kawagley, 1995, p. 42). His work was greatly valued and honored, as he spent his ‘growing up’ years in his rural Southwestern Alaskan community. He

walked in both worlds, with an upbringing of Indigenous knowledge and always pondering Indigenous and Western science and philosophy. His proactive Indigenous contributions were significant with his colleagues, peers, students, and educational institutions. Positive changes for Indigenous people continue to emerge as a result of Kawagley's grassroots efforts and collaborative work.

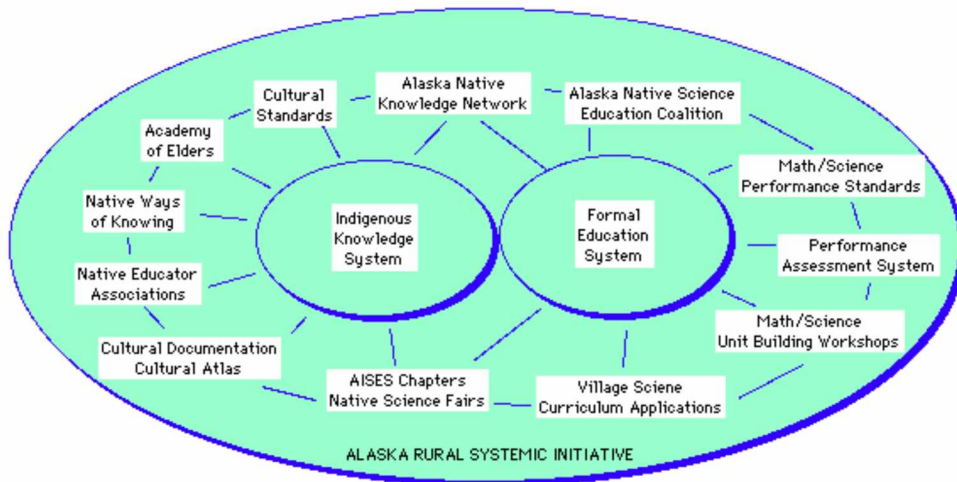
Kawagley and Barnhardt were directly involved with this implementation. A unique, successful aspect of this Indigenous knowledge system movement is much of it was recorded or documented in various forms by many knowledgeable sources in Alaska. That was a critical component, as Native knowledge is often oral. Barnhardt and Kawagley had a great vision for Alaska's educational system:

The purpose of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative has been to implement a set of initiatives that systematically document the Indigenous knowledge systems of Alaska Native people and develop pedagogical practices that appropriately integrate Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into all aspects of education. In practical terms, the most important intended outcome is increased recognition of the complementary nature of Native and western knowledge, so both can be effectively utilized as a foundation for the school curriculum and integrated into the way we think about learning and teaching.

(1998, pp. 9-10)

The Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI) Model contributed to Alaska Native PhD motivation and success.

Figure 2.1 displays the components of the AKRSI model, which is an integral part of Alaska Native education today.



**Figure 2.1: Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative Model (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 1998, p. 8)**

The model shows many connections with formal education systems and Indigenous knowledge systems. This correlates with the number of degrees in those broad categories for Alaska Native PhDs. Seventy four percent of the 90 Alaska Native PhD graduates were in STEM, Education, or Cultural Anthropology degree programs. Similar to the AKRSI Model there are many Alaska Native PhDs with degrees in math and sciences and fields with Indigenous knowledge systems as a core. The Chart of Degree Fields gives a breakdown of participants' attained degree fields (included as Appendix B). To this day, the Alaska Native Knowledge (ANKN) website is used extensively and not only by Alaskans. Indigenous researchers and educators in Alaska have common experiences and goals with other Indigenous groups. An example of an Indigenous society that represents similar past experiences and goals are the Māori people of New Zealand.

## **2.2. New Zealand's Māori PhD Expansion and Alaska's Proactive Measures**

The Indigenous people of New Zealand, the Māori, have experienced historical traumas from the impact of colonization that are similar to those the Alaska Native population encountered. The Māori have been leaders in resilience and perseverance. Alaska and New

Zealand's Indigenous groups have both experienced positive growth and changes in Indigenous education. Alaska has had the benefits of great friendships and respect with Māori scholars, researchers, and elders. Alaska continues to learn from the Māori, who have paved the way to self-determination in educational, political, socioeconomic, and cultural advancements in education. The Māori have made tremendous strides in efforts to set goals and vision in their education programs and institutions. There have been initiatives to create educated Māori leaders in decision-making roles and research education, as well as other influential roles affecting Māori people and their future. Alaska and other communities around the globe have paid attention to New Zealand's movement in higher education. Studies have been conducted in New Zealand to explore what they have done to create successful higher education programs. Two advocates for Alaska Native education, UAF's Dr. Richard Caulfield (2003) and Harvard University's Dr. Malia Villegas (2010), spent time in New Zealand to learn about progressive initiatives during an opportune time in Māori advancements.

There is a longstanding relationship and professional reciprocity between university instructors and Indigenous education advocates from New Zealand and Alaska. Alaska has benefited from learning New Zealand's model and New Zealand has gained a tremendous amount of Indigenous knowledge and cultural curriculum development from Alaskan educators who have paved the way in Native ways of knowing.

### **2.2.1 Strengthening the Māori vision with Alaska's watchful eyes: Caulfield's sabbatical expedition**

A study that influenced my own thinking on the value of research into participation rates of Alaska Natives in graduate studies was Caulfield's work on the New Zealand's Māori culture. The review will draw on some of Caulfield's 2003 account of his sabbatical to New Zealand that



occurred during the time that Smith was in the process of creating the dream of graduating 500 Māori PhDs in five years. He stated:

The process of strengthening Indigenous higher education is well underway in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The goal of educating 500 Māori PhDs as part of that process is ambitious but not beyond reach. In Alaska, we have similar opportunities. We simply need to embrace them and then act. (Caulfield, 2003, p. 23)

In its 2005 Strategic Plan, UAF states its goal of being “the premiere higher education center for Alaska Natives” and a model for demonstrating “how gender, racial, and cultural diversity can strengthen a university and society.” Caulfield’s paper based on his Māori observations includes several insights with relevance to this research. Caulfield (2003) stated: “Smith and his colleagues are embarking on a proactive effort to cultivate and mentor the next generation of Māori academics and leaders” (p. 1). He acknowledged that the 500 Māori PhDs in five years plan was based on three premises:

1. Strengthening higher education for Māori requires *building critical mass of university faculty* who can teach, do research, and be all-important role models for those following in their footsteps.
2. The plan is premised on the need for effective Indigenous leadership within the university.
3. Smith’s plan is based on a belief that universities both in Aotearoa/New Zealand and beyond can best serve Indigenous students through *innovative partnerships that acknowledge desires for Indigenous self-determination*. (2003, p.1)

Caulfield explained that the university system and government were taking active steps to support this ambitious task. The Māori had also created an Indigenous council, within the

educational institution, comprised of students, faculty, and staff. The collaboration provided a strong support network, which helped to drive the successful strategy.

Caulfield's (2003) response to the Māori challenge was to share their initiative with his home base campus, UAF. He felt it would benefit Alaska Native education due to the historical parallels the Māori have with Alaska's Indigenous people. He constructed his sabbatical paper into two parts: (a) Indigenous higher education in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and (b) Some insights for Indigenous higher education in Alaska and at UAF. He recounted past history of Māori failures in the school system and the dismal state of Māori cultural knowledge and pedagogy. There are strong parallels with the early history of Alaska Native education dating to the arrival of Western missionaries. For both groups, the loss of culture in the name of Western education led to "widespread social dysfunction and unrest" (Caulfield, 2003, p.6), which is still prevalent in Alaska today.

Some proactive Māori movements eventually evolved out of the social, educational, and political unrest. The Māori set goals for their higher institutions, including: (a) revitalization of language, knowledge, and culture; and (b) development of increased levels of Māori academic achievement at all levels (Caulfield, 2003, p. 7).

The Māori model has been widely embraced by Alaskan academics, as reflected in the University of Alaska Fairbanks' creation of the Indigenous Studies PhD degree program in 2008 and an active effort to hire more Alaska Native/American Indian faculty members. Likewise, the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) in Juneau has made efforts to increase Alaska Native faculty by hiring and placing three Alaska Native professors on a tenure track, when it only had one (not on tenure track) in 2009. Similarly, the other main campuses, University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) and University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) have several more Alaska Native

faculty members, both tenured and adjunct status. There are examples of positive shifts in Alaska Native faculty. The three main University of Alaska campuses have tenure and tenure track Alaska Native faculty, as well as term and adjunct Alaska Native faculty (included as Appendix C). Research was conducted and confirmed with Alaska Native faculty and faculty individuals from all three main University of Alaska's to ensure these numbers are accurate with self-identified and published information.

In the University of Alaska (UA) systems, there has been a fairly new movement for Alaska Native faculty and staff since 2013. Alaska Native staff, faculty, and administrators at the various campuses are supportive of each other. The Alaska Native Studies Council (ANSC) is a collaborative effort of Alaska Native university employees, primarily faculty, who are working together to create supports systems and curriculum to support Alaska Native knowledge, students, staff, and faculty in Alaska's university systems.

The purpose as stated by the ANSC group is to:

...mentor, support, and increase exchange of Indigenous knowledge and Alaska Native ways of knowing. The mission of the organization is to identify, develop, and implement Native-focused curricula, to promote and publish Alaska Native-related research and pedagogical strategies. (Alaska Native Studies Council, 2013)

Although there has been progress in a depressed state economy, Alaska Native faculty still remain disproportionate in relation to the percentage of Alaska Native college students in the UA system. However, the proactive ANSC members have been working in a positive direction with establishing some consistency within the University of Alaska system regarding common language with some student learning outcomes in a few courses.

The University of Alaska Review (2016, p. 122) shows the increased number of Alaska Native/American Indian faculty between 2011-2015. In 2011, there were 110 Alaska Native/American Indian faculty members at the three campuses. In 2015, the number increased to 129, which is a 17.3% increase in the five years. It is mentioned in the report that unduplicated race allows faculty to be counted only once. If a faculty member declares Alaska Native/American Indian and White, they would count as Alaska Native/American Indian. The Alaska Native Studies Council numbers are different in that Alaska Natives are self-declared and American Indian numbers were not closely tracked.

The three University of Alaska (UA) institutions are collaborating and hosted their second annual ANSC Conference in March 2014. The conference provided a venue to share recent research from PhD graduate students, scholars, elders and community members on a range of topics and issues related to Indigenous studies, languages, arts, and education. This is an example of the second goal Caulfield (2003) discussed regarding leadership of Indigenous groups by having Alaska Native faculty meet on a regular basis throughout the year and plan each annual conference with a group of mostly Alaska Native faculty. The annual conference originated in 2013 with not only Alaska Native researchers and professors, but also international and nationally recognized Indigenous scholars in attendance as well. The ANSC conference allows for capacity building with research and collaboration, thus influencing and motivating Indigenous scholars who are working towards a PhD and continuing their research. Undergraduate and graduate students and even some elders attend the annual gatherings, which rotate between the three UA's each spring. The original design was to have the conference every other year, but it has been so successful, that it is offered each spring. An important component of the conference is that it continues to have Alaska Native faculty, staff, and administrators at

the three UA campuses organizing the conferences, with the shared goal to address issues related to Alaska Native Education across the campuses. Along with each conference there is an electronic journal publication focusing on topics at the conferences. The ANSC Conference has had themes of language revitalization as well as “growing our own” and “self-determination” (2014).

In his writing on Indigenous higher education initiatives in New Zealand, Caulfield (2003) identified three strategies for strengthening Māori higher education. There are examples at UAF where these strategies have been somewhat put into place. The first strategy Caulfield (2003) discussed was “creating a university within a university” (p. 14). Influential Alaskan education leaders, such as Barnhardt, Kawagley, and others, worked together to create the Indigenous Studies PhD program at UAF. It was officially open for enrollment in 2009. As stated on the UAF Indigenous Studies home page, their program goals directly relate to lessons from the Māori experience (2009). The specific UAF goals that support the university within a university concept are:

1. To provide the programmatic infrastructure for advanced, in-depth, interdisciplinary graduate studies and research in academic fields related to the role of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing in the contemporary world.
2. To prepare graduates who are capable of conducting basic and applied research on social, political, educational, economic and cultural issues of concern to people and communities in the circumpolar north, with a particular emphasis on Alaska.
3. To expand the pool of knowledgeable and highly skilled Alaskans who can assume leadership and technical positions with public and private sector organizations, including

universities, school districts, social service agencies, Native corporations, tribal governments, and state and federal agencies in Alaska and beyond. (UAF, 2009)

The goals support a university within a university concept by having a specialized doctoral program within their university that is of interest and significance to Alaska Native people. The goals are broad enough to attract a wide range of academic interests related to social, political, educational, economic and cultural issues of concern to Alaskans. The concept allows for relationship building given the smaller size.

Caulfield (2003) stated the second Māori strategy was to strengthen Māori education with, “new partnerships involving *whare wānanga* (tribal colleges & universities)” (p. 12). An example of the strategy in Alaska would be the collaboration of the ANSC with representatives from the various UA campuses working together to plan the annual ANSC conference. Another example was Alaska Native faculty from all campuses coming together monthly via audio conference to discuss the 2014 UA Strategic Vision draft created by the UA administration. There was minimal language and action in the UA system’s vision statement that recognized and advocated for Alaska Native presence from the three main campuses in the initial draft of the 2014 Strategic Vision.

Caulfield (2003) noted that Māori education was strengthened by a third strategy, expanding Māori teaching and research capacity. Several Māori institutes or ‘centers for excellence’ were created to support this strategy. An example of one such support center was the National Institute of Research Excellence for Māori Development and Advancement. New Zealand’s government was to fund approximately \$17-\$18 million over five years to support such centers. The centers’ goals were to strengthen Māori education, health, and sciences (Caulfield, 2003, p. 14). UAF has a similar structure they are envisioning that will house an

Indigenous Studies Center that they are working towards opening on campus. This Indigenous space would be similar to the Māori centers.

Mirroring the Māori experience, UAF's Indigenous Studies faculty, staff, and students are working hard to increase the critical mass of PhD graduates. After returning from New Zealand, Caulfield (2003) wrote:

I believe that UAF must expand and strengthen the objectives and strategies of Strategic Plan 2005 in this area if it is to become the premiere education center for building a critical mass of Indigenous faculty, giving greater voice to Indigenous academic leadership, and encouraging broader university involvement in for Indigenous and rural programs. The outcome of this process should include a plan implementing, monitoring, and evaluating progress toward these objectives over the next five to ten years. (p. 15)

Caulfield offered three paths for strengthening Alaska Native presence and voice in Alaska's public higher education system. The first path was to build critical mass (Caulfield, 2003, p.16), which the UA campuses are making progress towards, not only with hiring faculty and staff, but also with building Indigenous and Alaska Native programs as well. The second path focused on giving greater voice to Alaska Native leadership within the university (Caulfield, 2003, p. 18). Caulfield's third path for strengthening Alaska Native presence and voice at UAF was based on the Māori's premise of 'giving greater voice to Indigenous leadership within the university' (p. 18). Caulfield discussed building a facility to serve as the home of Native and rural education (under consideration is a site on the UAF campus adjacent to the current museum). Barnhardt unveiled an architectural plan of the building model, Troth Yeddha' Indigenous Studies Center, at the ANSC Conference in March 2014 in Juneau. In addition to

these three specific paths, Caulfield had other suggestions for UAF. He suggested “encouraging broader university involvement in rural & Indigenous programs” (Caulfield, 2003, p. 19).

UAF offers an annual semester-long seminar course where UAF students collaborated with professors and graduate students from the University of Hawai‘i-Manoa, University of Hawai‘i- Hilo, University of British Columbia, University of Saskatchewan, Diné College, Arizona State University, and Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi in New Zealand. The seminar has developed into an annual UAF course, owing to the high interest level from students. Several students have repeated the course to exchange new research information and learn from each other. Another suggestion of Caulfield’s was to “partner proactively with Native tribes, corporations, and organizations” (2003, p. 20). This initiative was already actively implemented with the creation of AKRSI and all of the initiatives that fell under the AKRSI umbrella prior to Caulfield’s sabbatical leave.

Caulfield’s (2003) final suggestion included “celebrating contributions of Indigenous peoples to UAF and Alaska as a whole” (p. 21). UAF has maintained an instruction technology specialist—an individual who is dedicated to the Indigenous Studies program as well as any other Alaska Native programs on campus. This position has been an integral part of successful communication with distance students. UAF’s Indigenous Studies PhD program has broadened its reach through the successful use of e-learning opportunities. Some examples of the ways in which instructional technology has been used to support distance communication in UAF’s Indigenous Studies PhD program include: Voice Thread, Google Hangouts, graduate student forums, Skype communication, texting, and audio conferences with monthly brown bag conversations created by doctoral students some semesters. The use of technology has allowed geographically disparate members of different Indigenous Studies PhD cohorts to connect with



and support one another. Within the last decade, Alaska has embraced many of the objectives and steps demonstrated by the Māori people, as documented by Caulfield. His work proved to be relevant and useful with Alaska Native postsecondary education.

### **2.2.2 Existing literature on successes of the Māori PhD graduate program:**

#### **Villegas' Fulbright fellowship journey**

Another significant document in the literature review is Malia Villegas' dissertation, which details the advocacy efforts and the need for more Alaska Native PhD graduates. Her qualitative case study also drew on the Māori model and related initiatives, and it involved being immersed in the Māori educational community to explore how they were able to accomplish the challenging goal of graduating 500 Māori PhDs in five years. Villegas is an Alutiiq-Sugpiaq Harvard-trained scholar. She spent time in New Zealand studying the Māori effort to quadruple their PhD graduation rates. Villegas' visit occurred in 2008, eight years after Caulfield's sabbatical. Villegas' (2010) qualitative study "explores why Māori are focused on doctoral development; how they achieved this goal; and what kinds of changes it has inspired" (p. 6). Villegas was attracted to this research because it was inspirational and it held implications for the Alaska Native population. She indicated the objective of the initiative to graduate 500 Māori PhDs in five years was "to prepare a critical mass of Indigenous education leaders across an entire nation through largely mainstream institutions" (Villegas, 2010, p. 6). This was synonymous with Caulfield's findings.

Villegas was also one of the early advocates for the Alaska Native PhD program, along with Barnhardt, Kawagley, and others. She shared her interest in this topic at the 2014 ANSC Conference. Villegas said the Māori topic evolved partly from a conversation with Māori leader, Graham Hingangaroa Smith, with whom she spoke at the 2007 American Educational Research

Association (AERA) Conference in Chicago. At the ANSC Conference, Villegas shared: “He encouraged me to come to New Zealand to see what they had built and to see if there were insights I could bring back to Alaska. I applied for the Fulbright later that year and was there in 2008.” Villegas chose to explore this topic as a contribution to increasing the critical mass of Alaska Native PhD graduates. Her research question was, “What made the goal of graduating a large number of Māori with doctorates desirable, possible, and inspirational?” (Villegas, 2010, p. 58). One of her sub-questions was, “What insights emerge from it that might be instructive for other Indigenous communities seeking to develop education leaders?” (Villegas, 2010, p. 58).

Villegas’s work describes reasons why the doctoral program was desirable from the standpoint of Māori students. She recognized students’ intrinsic motivation as it related to the Māori culture. She observed Graham Hingangaroa Smith’s leadership emphasis on the importance of increasing Māori PhD graduates and the effects that would have for his people. He framed it as an important endeavor to define who they were and the importance of knowing their genealogy. Villegas (2010) wrote:

When I asked participants why so many Māori would be willing to undertake such a significant pursuit, they consistently pointed to the whakapapa (genealogies) of this doctoral effort, which is rooted in a “tradition” and “system” of Māori education that predates contact with European people, cultures, and institutions. (p. 70)

When Villegas asked what this meant, the Māori said they have always had culturally based knowledge traditions with culturally based institutions. These institutions have had set standards and protocols with their curriculum. Their educational setting for the meetings included rituals and ceremony. This may be similar to a long house with Alaska Native people in southeast Alaska. Set protocols and procedures occurred in these spiritual spaces. Villegas’

interviews noted the positive value of the Māori's attainment of their doctoral degrees. She mentioned it was for success in education and not to address the gap or deficits the Māori people may have had in the system (Villegas, 2010). Villegas noted implications for Alaska's higher education institutions. She acknowledged that Alaska Natives have many researchers in occupational and academic fields. She also reflected on what she learned in New Zealand and determined that it may not always be the right approach for Native education in her Alaska homeland. Villegas reflected heavily on what research means to the Māori people and how Alaska can use the information to its best advantage while we work to increase our population of graduate-level Alaska Native researchers.

As part of her doctoral research, Villegas also explored and discussed alternative methods of gathering research with community-based groups. She wrote that higher education can be “a space where Indigenous people find new applications for Indigenous knowledge and meaningful ways to express their creativity and culture” (Villegas, 2010, p. 283). She emphasized the importance of culture and knowing one's personal stories and history, which would also be important in research of Alaska Native PhD graduates with their personal interviews and surveys in this research project.

Villegas is an example of an Alaska Native scholar wanting to give back and advocate for her people, as many Indigenous scholars do. There is a reason and a passion for their research. She found it on her journey exploring the Māori successes and how they could contribute to Alaska Native people. She graduated with her EdD from Harvard University in 2010 (Perea, 2013). Caulfield and Villegas had an intrinsic motivation for finding what works to increase Alaska Native postsecondary efforts of graduating more Alaska Native graduate students. Another doctoral graduate, Jessica Bissett Perea (2013), had a similar interest.

### **2.3. Existing Alaska Native PhD Graduates: Perea's Tribalography**

Dr. Jessica Bissett Perea graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles. Perea (Athabascan) is from [city], Alaska. Perea noted universities nationally produced nine Alaska Native PhDs during the 2010-2011 school year (Perea, 2013). Perea's PhD degree is in musicology, but she explains how music "bridges together" ethnic studies, art, drama, media and other arts. She is currently a professor at University of California Davis. She published a 2013 postdoctoral research paper with data on the number of Alaska Native doctoral graduates, both earned and honorary. Perea's work was essential with this research project.

This discussion centers on Perea's list working list of 70 Alaska Native PhD degree holders compiled in early spring 2015, shown in Table 4.2, rather than her original list shown in Appendix A. Perea described how she came to use the term tribalography:

My theoretical approach applies an Alaska Native perspective to what Choctaw author and playwright LeAnne Howe calls "tribalography" – a dialogic methodology that offers critical interventions to historic and contemporary erasures that are simultaneously informed by the cumulative injustices of colonization yet guided by optimism for future self-determination. (2013, p. 3)

She further defines this methodology and approach as an important element in self-determination for Alaska Natives and American Indians. It "reclaims and thus indigenizes the very definitions and narratives that have served to 'authenticate' and dehumanize Native people for centuries" (Perea, 2013, p. 6).

Perea defines her work with her "tribalography of presence":

I outline an applied theoretical framework, what I am calling a "tribalography of presence," that accounts for the diversity of Alaska Native people's presence and agency within

dominant American histories and institutions. I then provide a brief description and analysis of the “Alaska Native Scholars Project,” a work-in-progress focused on documenting a long yet hidden lineage of Alaska Native men and women who have earned research doctoral degrees (e.g., Ph.D. and Ed.D.). (2013, p. 2)

For the purposes of this specific research project, the focus is on Perea’s table of earned doctoral degrees. Perea’s original list of 57 PhDs in the fall of 2013 in Appendix A currently has 90 PhDs as of early 2018, as shown in Appendix D. A list of at least 15 PhD candidates exists now, which will again increase the numbers of Alaska Native PhD graduates. The Alaska Native PhD list had 70 Alaska Native PhD graduates during the data-gathering portion of this research project, which ended in spring, 2015. Aside from the personal extensive research conducted for this project, Alaska Native PhD graduate contacts, assistance (mainly via email and social media) from peers, colleagues, and professors was helpful. Some of the recent additional names were earlier dated graduates who graduated before the original Earned PhD degree publication of 2013.

There are a number of factors that support persistence and success for Indigenous graduate students. While the greatest predictor for PhD success in other cultures may be generational (offspring of PhDs following their parent’s educational path), all but two of the current 90 Alaska Native PhDs are first generation doctors (Perea, 2013). During the data collection phase, there was only one PhD graduate with a parent who had earned a PhD.

#### **2.4 Relevant Research on Non-Alaska Populations: An Overview**

The literature search uncovered several studies into doctoral attainment in other U.S. sub-populations and within U.S. academia in general. Comparing this information and contrasting it

to the focus area has helped to guide the research direction. Analyzing these previous studies assisted in the survey design.

A dissertation by Antoinette Rogers at the Virginia Commonwealth University, examines factors leading to successful attainment of PhD degrees among African American women. Her work has strong similarities to this proposal in both the research design and integration of qualitative data. Rogers' (2006) work also looks at factors contributing to attrition among female African American degree seekers (p. 9), a relevant research question that had not initially been contemplated and was not expanded upon in this research project.

One theory informing Rogers' study is from her research with Tinto's work from 1993, *The Doctoral Education Persistence Theory*. Tinto's theory suggests there are particular attributes contributing to doctoral student persistence and eventual success. Those are "personal attributes, entry orientations to institutions, institutional experiences, academic and social integration and research experiences" (Rogers, 2006, p. 10). Rogers then emphasizes, "Socialization encompasses integration into the academic setting in both the social and academic domains. This integration is key to progression along the path to the doctorate" (p. 11). This would likely be an important focus contributing to success with Alaska Native doctoral graduates. Students that work in isolation, both academically and socially, have a difficult time finishing.

One significant variable Rogers noted was the fundamental role that financial resources play in enrollment status. Rogers (2006) shares a sentiment that likely mirrors the Alaska Native experience:

If relatively few African Americans are pursuing undergraduate degrees, there will continue to be only a few in the pipeline to pursue masters and doctorates. Minority

students must apply to, gain admission, and successfully finish programs in order to increase doctoral degree completion rates. Without a critical mass of doctoral candidates and degree-holders, there will continue to be a gross underrepresentation and uneven distribution of African American doctorates in the U.S. workforce. (pp. 25-26)

Rogers (2006) advocated for having more minorities in leadership roles in the workforce, similar to the need with our Alaska Native population. Rogers' (2006) literature review led to several studies of persistence and doctoral attainment that had relevance to this research topic. Three of the studies Rogers examined in the course of her research: Gillingham, Seneca and Taussig (1991); Maher, Ford and Thompson (2004); and the Sisters of the Academy Institute (2006).

Gillingham et al. (1991) discovered that arts and science students' "time to degree" (TTD) was influenced by certain variables. The authors stated, "...spending more hours on academic work reduces expected TTD (and) working more hours at a job has the opposite effect" (p. 464). Those variables included working part or full time when enrolled, and study time with peers or by oneself. Gillingham et al. (1991) discovered that students who put more time into their program were able to graduate more quickly, and that race was not a factor influencing completion. The authors also concluded that applied and social sciences students finished earlier than humanities students. Included in their findings were comparisons between foreign and U.S. students employed while enrolled in a program. The research team did not find age to be a significant factor. The average gender distribution of the 713 PhD students in the Gillingham study was 31.9 years old for females and 29.5 years old for males (p. 13).

Another key piece of literature reviewed by Rogers is a research project by Maher, Ford, and Thompson (2004). They examined women doctoral education students, which involved a

mixed methods study of 295 Stanford University doctoral students. One hundred sixty alumni responded to their survey. Maher's team "reviewed relevant literature to identify factors associated with doctoral degree progress and then conducted focus groups and interviews with doctoral students" (2004, p. 388). The team focused on interviews with focus groups of female participants, following the survey, which consisted of 46 questions. The participants were asked what elements facilitated or hindered their degree progress (Maher et al., p. 388). The questions included factors related to "eighteen identified factors thought to facilitate degree progress, including available funding, supportive advising, productive experiences prior to and during the doctoral program, preparedness to conduct a dissertation study, and motivation to complete the program in a timely manner" (p. 389). Part of their study related to 28 factors that contributed to their attrition. Some of those were lack of funding, family responsibilities, poor advising, personal illness, lack of preparedness with dissertation study, and lack of motivation (p. 389).

The study by Maher et al. (2004) produced findings around "early, middle, and late finishers." The early and middle degree completers scored high on a "strong commitment to finish in a timely manner." Some other markedly high responses were "having a helpful advisor/committee" and "productive prior professional experience." Another response receiving strong scores was, "help/support from other doctoral students" (p. 392).

The late finishers had the highest responses in the following: "supportive, helpful, or actively involved advisor (86%), being well prepared to conduct a dissertation study (78%), "financial support from sources outside of the university" (75%), and "taking a special class or linking with a particular faculty mentor" (72%) (Maher et al., 2004, p. 393). Both early and late finishers prioritized financial response as being tied to finishing in a timely manner. While the early finishers were driven, the researchers recognized two themes among successful students,



early completer graduates stated they wished they took their time and enjoyed the program, and some wished they explored different degree options (p. 397).

The Maher study (2004) was a comprehensive study that not only presented factors supporting PhD attainment for women, but it also had a significant amount of information on attrition of PhD students. Some of their questions investigated in these studies that impacted survey development for this study were: financial aid support (from the university and outside sources), part-time or full-time status, peer support and motivation, mentorship support, and advisor support.

One other relevant study cited by Rogers was from the Sisters of the Academy (SOTA) Institute program. Rogers identified the organization's emphasis of support networks for Black women. Other minority women can join their national organization. Areas of support included networking, individual and collaborative scholarship and promoting professional development. Sisters of the Academy Institute is known as a successful support network organization for African American women with at least a graduate degree (SOTA, 2008). There were some components of Sisters of the Academy Institute support group that contributed to recommendations discussed in Chapter Seven. Sisters of the Academy Institute leaders presented their doctoral support program at the annual National Conference on Race and Equity (NCORE) in Washington DC, (2015). The mission of this national group "is to facilitate the success of Black women in the academy" (NCORE, 2015, p. 76). Their conference presentation provided specific examples of how they support women in academia. An example of a successful initiative the sisters shared at the conference was their Research Boot Camp (SOTA, 2008). The academy is an annual intense, one-week program that gives support to doctoral students who are designing or writing their dissertation. Many expert support sisters and mentors are on hand to assist the

students. In conversation following their conference presentation, they shared they allow other minority women the opportunity to join their national academic sisterhood.

Rogers (2006) displayed her findings of “Factors Leading to Doctoral Degree Attainment for African American Women: Institutional Factors, External Factors, and Outside of Those Areas, and Personal Factors” in a Venn diagram figure (p. 142). The institutional factors are: (a) departmental support, (b) academic support, and (c) financial support. The external (supportive) factors are moral support and spirituality: family, friends, and personal spiritual beliefs. The social support section was the merging of the two areas in that section that included: colleagues in program, advisor, mentor, community of scholars, warm and nurturing environment, dedicated writing time, organizational membership, and ease of transition and adjustment to graduate school. Rogers (2006) also listed personal factors, separate from the Venn diagram, but vital to success. Personal factor categories were: (a) ownership of doctoral process, (b) knowledge of self, (c) self-determination, (d) full-time matriculation, (e) a plan of action, and (f) response/navigational skills (p. 142). Rogers stated her summary was not meant for the general population of PhD doctoral graduates, as her focus was on women and minorities, which was helpful with this research project design (2006).

## **2.5 Research on American Indian Graduates**

Well-respected researchers Larimore and McClellan (2005) stated “There is a clear need for additional scholarly research on the experiences of Native American students in postsecondary education” (p. 27). Their work supports the relevance and need for this research project, which was also recognized as important by Alaska Native PhD graduates, as reflected on the high percentage of them who participated in this survey. The participants had a range of

advice to aspiring and current Alaska Native PhD students, as discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, and Solyom (2012) conducted research in higher education among American Indian and Alaska Native students. In a report examining postsecondary education these authors provided insight on critical issues, conditions, and solutions for Alaska Natives and American Indians. A relevant section discussed supportive factors for Indigenous graduate completers. Resiliency and self-motivation were vital areas for “students of color” (p. 87). Brayboy et al. (2012) concluded, “there are a number of factors that support persistence and success for Indigenous graduate students; including mentoring, and the desire to give back to one’s tribe and support Native communities” (p. 87). The research team mentioned self-descriptors from Indigenous doctoral students as being--“persistent, tenacious, determined, and goal committed.” The researchers mentioned the significance of “spiritual, mental, social, and physical well-being as contributors to their success and resilience” (p. 87). These individual characteristics were contributing factors in this research project with Alaska Native doctoral students’ success and resilience.

Brayboy et al. (2012) unveiled positive influences and the significance of having Indigenous faculty supporting Alaska Native and American Indian completers. If they were not available, other ‘faculty of color’ contributed to their success. The Indigenous graduates found support networks at other institutions if not available in their own area and used conferencing to overcome distance (p. 88). A final noteworthy finding was Indigenous students had a desire to give back to their communities (p. 88). This parallels the tribal values of various Alaska Native groups. This is also something Villegas (2010) expressed in her dissertation.

## **2.6 Research-Based Summary of Recommendations for Strengthening Indigenous Student Success in Doctoral Programs**

A review of the existing research reveals many common factors that contribute to successful attainment of a doctoral degree with students, many of which are independent of added challenges based on gender or ethnicity. Based on this review of the literature, factors contributing to doctoral degree success include:

- Being resilient, having character traits of tenacity, persistence, self-determination, and being goal-orientated
- Having financial supports
- Having social supports-whether it be peers, faculty members, counselors, or family members
- Having academic supports-whether they be with faculty or advisors
- Having moral support and spirituality from family, friends, or personal belief systems-emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental
- Having the desire to give back to the community or tribe
- Making the commitment and time on task to complete the degree in a timely manner

This literature review influenced the research design by showing the relevance of a mixed methods study, and by inspiring the inclusion of personal interviews and a detailed survey to get more detailed responses and questions related to time to finish, motivation, and supports.

Examples of supports were financial, academic, social, cultural, and spiritual supports during the PhD journey.

Prior to completing my research I anticipated that Rogers' (2006) work on institutional factors and external factors would be critical elements for Alaska Native PhDs, as would financial, academic, social supports and possibly spirituality.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology: Research Issues Related to PhD Dissertation Topic**

My father used to say, “When you’ve taken the opportunity to listen, you’ve had the opportunity to observe, then you too might have a story to tell.” We have the potential to tell a story. If we could just allow our juniors behind us this opportunity to pursue a PhD, a PhD is like collecting all this information so that you can tell a good story later...

Going through a PhD program is like going camping or going fishing, or fishing for the summer to harvest fish for the summer. We have to collect all these things so that we can get good and healthy fish so that we could survive the winter. Collecting data is like collecting all that we need so that we can survive. A dissertation is the same. It is synonymous to that. If we can deliver something that is going to last, that a future generation could look at and say, “Wow, I could do this too.”

~Alaska Native PhD participant

The statement above provides insight into one Alaska Native PhD’s cultural perspective on the value of attaining the degree that goes beyond the individual accomplishment to become a shared benefit for all Alaska Native people. In this view, the work of the PhD can be seen as harvesting sustenance, ensuring the health and survival of the tribe, and research becoming comparable to building knowledge through the tradition of storytelling.

From this perspective, it is possible to understand the pursuit of Alaska Native scholars to fulfill their individual academic ambitions, which also elevates the common good of their people by building upon the base of knowledge and lighting a path for other Alaska Natives to follow. Likewise, it is the hope that this examination into Alaska Native scholars will help illuminate a path towards ‘growing our own’ and building a capacity that increases the ranks of Alaska Native PhD graduates. Much like the analogy of the PhD as the harvester and storyteller, knowledge builds upon knowledge, and success builds upon the success of those that came

before. Aspiring Alaska Native students increase the tribe's provisions to survive another winter and shape new knowledge and understanding that is grounded in Alaska Natives' worldview.

This chapter presents information on my methods for collecting and analyzing data. It provides detail on the design of data collection tools, survey and interview collection instruments, how the data were analyzed, and issues and outcome of the data collection process. My research approach utilized a mixed methods study consisting of both quantitative and qualitative approaches for collecting data. This research method allowed for the greatest degree of qualitative strength to a primarily social research study that relies on human experience and cultural perspective. The survey is not a design frame in itself. It is "rather more than a method, but rather less than a design frame, as defined by Thomas (2013, p. 176). Two examples of these methods for collecting data are interviews and questionnaires. My reasoning in employing this study approach is that an eclectic mixed methods approach would result in a substantive dataset lending itself to quantitative measurements and qualitative data consisting of important personal insights that might support and illuminate the quantitative data. Thomas (2013) also stated, "once these descriptive data have been collected they can be examined for the existence of relationships between and among them" (p. 176). Several strategies for data analysis are discussed in this chapter. Examples of how I employed these strategies are shown as well.

### **3.1 Research Topics and Issues**

This topic was highly relevant, given the limited amount of information available, specifically on Alaska Native PhD graduates. I did not foresee any controversial issues with my proposed research, as it did not involve children. The study was proactive research with information that had broad benefits to Alaska Native postsecondary students, particularly graduate students. Participants had the option to not participate in the survey or interview. I was

selective and intentional with whom I interviewed to assure my responses were diverse in nature. I did not have an issue with interview participants, as all ten agreed to participate in my interview. The one issue I had to be cognizant of was confidentiality, given the small population of Alaska Native PhD graduates.

### **3.2 Institutional Review Board Approval Process**

The process of data collection for my project went smoother than anticipated. I was fortunate to receive guidance from Dr. Amy Vinlove while constructing the methodology. She helped with specific guidance as my principal investigator throughout the detailed Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. The entire IRB packet with survey and interview questions was approved on April 10, 2014. See Appendix E for IRB Exemption Letter. Appendix F is the Informed Consent Form for survey and it shows the main categories of questions. I submitted a change request to the IRB office following the data collection. I received approval to use a real name of one of the participants for one of his quoted paragraphs. Permission was granted from the IRB office and the interview participants to publish their stories as they are written. Other information such as specific places and location names are confidential.

### **3.3 Research Goal and Design**

The goal of my research study was to examine the factors influencing motivation and successful attainment of Alaska Native PhD graduates. The hope was that this research might inform institutions and individuals in ways that would lead to increased numbers of Alaska Native PhD and EdD graduates. The research design involved a mixed methods study, which led to a better and a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Greene (2007) describes what ‘better understanding’ means in a mixed methods study:

1. Getting it right, enhancing the validity or credibility of our findings



2. Doing our work better, generating understandings that are broader, deeper, more inclusive, and that more centrally honor the complexity and contingency of human phenomena
3. Unsettling the settled, probing the contested, challenging the given, engaging multiple, often discordant perspectives and lenses,
4. Foregrounding the political and value dimension of our work, to not just illuminate them but also to engage with each other about our differences, to advance our dialogues. (p. 21)

The combination of my survey responses and interviews of participants provides a more comprehensive, deeper understanding of what led to their successful attainment of a doctoral degree. The mixed methods study led to a broader and better understanding of what motivated the Alaska Native PhD graduates. Both methodological approaches assisted my research. Each involved collecting and analyzing data by integrating and connecting observations and prior research (Creswell, 2012, p. 20). My approach was to develop a quantitative survey instrument targeting the study population of Alaska Native PhD scholars. I then drew on my quantitative finds and literature review and expanded on my thesis through a qualitative approach that included ten personal interviews.

My initial idea for this research emerged following reading Perea's Tribalography as described in the previous chapter (Perea, 2013, p. 16). I enjoy data and tables so I studied the tables closely. Out of interest, then concern, I learned that Native Hawai'ians and New Zealand Māoris had several hundred more graduated PhDs in recent history than Alaska Natives.

Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005b) discussed their vision and efforts to create the Indigenous Studies PhD program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Those documents

motivated me to delve into the positive aspects of this important work focusing on Alaska Native PhD graduates. This topic was appealing and a natural fit, as I spent a great deal of energy studying Alaska Native student success at the secondary level. I was aware that not all of the research would be “positive.” I knew I would get some data showing the challenges many Alaska Native PhDs endured. I explored the challenges my participants face, but more importantly, their resiliency and success.

Greene defines mixed methods for purposes of complementarity as follows:

With this purpose, a mixed methods study seeks broader, deeper, and more comprehensive social understandings by using methods that tap into different facets or dimensions of the same complex phenomenon. In a complementarity mixed methods study, results from the different methods serve to elaborate, enhance, deepen, and broaden the overall interpretations and inferences from the study. (2007, p. 101)

This mixed methods approach was the best approach to gather and interpret data by means of surveying as many of the population as possible and interviewing a broad representation with ten interviews.

A follow-up qualitative study with interviews of some PhDs did provide some findings, which led to some common themes relating to why this ethnically rare group of PhDs were attracted to and ultimately succeeded in completing their doctorate programs. Following my survey data collection, I needed to “make sense of the information by taking the data apart to determine individual responses and then put it together to summarize it” (Creswell, 2012, p. 10). Alaska Native people had some Indigenous researchers pave the path and need to continue to produce more research and contribute to the development of more Alaska Native PhD researchers.

The plan was to analyze and sort the responses with anticipation of discovering themes and essences of specific factors that contributed to their graduation success. The next step was to identify themes derived from the literature review including: (a) social support networks, (b) academic supports, (c) financial supports inside and outside of the university, (d) cultural and spiritual supports, and (e) motivation. Questions related to background demographics, challenges, barriers, resilience, and advice for Alaska Native graduate students and universities.

The primary questions for my investigation were:

- What factors or sets of factors do these Alaska Native PhD/EdDs have in common which led to their success?
- What challenges and barriers are unique to the Alaska Native demographics?
- If patterns of successful factors exist, can these factors be replicated to expand Alaska Native participation in PhD/EdD programs?
- Are there ‘lessons learned’ in terms of adding University PhD/EdD programs to attract and graduate Alaska Native PhD/EdD students?

### **3.4 Determining the Data Collection Group**

The data collection group was limited to the number of Alaska Native PhD and EdD graduates that exist. The research data set was the revised list of 70 Alaska Native Earned PhDs, found in on Table 4.2, dating up to early 2015.

Extensive research and networking proved to be fruitful when finding additional Alaska Native PhD graduates to add to Perea’s initial list (2013). Physically locating and dialoguing with new and existing PhDs proved a challenge that required time and patience.

A web-based search using Google was conducted to locate several Alaska Native PhD graduates. Names and email addresses were discovered for several additional names on the list

prior to survey distribution. Dr. Perea (2013) provided some contacts from her original list. The next step was to send the compilation of names to the director of the UAF Alaska Native Knowledge Network and asked if he had any addresses to contribute. Some of my professors had contact information for Alaska Native PhD graduates too. One other strategy for gathering email addresses was via Facebook, the social media site on the Internet. Facebook was an effective tool as my Alaska Native colleagues and peers have many personal and professional connections on the website. Another helpful resource to gather participants was a local elder/professor who once taught Native education courses at an Alaska university. She was a key person in the Alaska Native education movement during the AKRSI era and she kept in contact with some of the earliest Alaska Native doctoral graduates. This elder was generous and supportive with anything related to the university and in particular, Alaska Native education. Alaska Native PhD alumni were also sources, as some of them knew other Native peers during the time in their doctoral programs.

Once making contact with a potential survey participant, the first task was to share my research project and seek their support and ownership of its importance. Unexpectedly, some Alaska Native PhDs gave information on other peer graduates who were not on the Alaska Native Earned PhD list. In some cases, there were only records and names of graduates that lacked email addresses or other methods of making contact. An efficient tool was using social media and establishing a dedicated Facebook account to reach and communicate with some of the survey population and Indigenous peers who were well connected. Contacts with Alaska Native corporations proved helpful information with locating individuals who had formally participated in corporate scholarship programs. They would often contact me when I gave the corporations my contact information. This research culminated in likely the most up to date and

comprehensive contact list of living Alaska Native PhDs. Once assembled, this population list became the critical source of my participant list. The research part was like detective work and quite enjoyable. Despite exhaustive efforts with Internet and phone inquiries around the country and overseas, only two PhD contacts were not able to be located.

I conducted an initial survey with both selective response and constructed response questions and followed up with personal interviews (qualitative) from ten Alaska Native PhD graduates, who represented eight Alaska Native tribes.

Research of honorary doctorates was not included although the contributions and work they did was important.

### **3.5 Designing the Survey Instrument**

The online survey instrument, Survey Monkey, addressed numerous quantitative capabilities. Specifically, the survey included dichotomous questions, meaning two-way ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses, multiple choice, drop-down menus, matrix rating scales, single text boxes for short comments, and larger comment boxes for open questions.

Many questions provided optional text comment fields to allow the participant to expand upon ‘open questions.’ Open questions allowed for detailed responses from participants if they chose to expand upon them (Thomas, 2013, p. 208). The use of optional text fields gave participants the ability to have their voice heard and their personal experience heard.

The desired approach was dependent on collecting a strong enough response rate in the survey to make inferences and identify patterns among the 59 participants. One of the unique qualities of this design was the potential to poll the entire study population (all living Alaska Native PhDs), which resulted in extremely strong confidence in the data.

Some of the subjects that I found important to add to my questions were: financial aid support (from the university and outside sources), part-time or full-time status, peer support and motivation, mentorship support, and advisor support.

The self-descriptors mentioned in the Brayboy et al. study (2012) contributed to this project's survey design. The concept allowed for the creation of similar survey questions related to Alaska Native PhDs sharing their PhD journey and the completion of their doctoral degree. Brayboy et al. (2012) shared self-descriptors in their study. Because of that document, two questions regarding a single or few words were added to the survey to describe their PhD journey and completion of their program. The program, Wordle (n.d.), was then implemented to create a visual representation of the participants' descriptive journey and completion, which are illustrated in the last chapter.

The literature review influenced some aspects of my variables, but personal experiences as a lifelong Alaska Native educator also influenced my choice of variables. Some questions emerged based on my experiences with a demanding schedule as a master's degree student, raising a family, being involved in community service, and teaching full time. I carefully thought about many aspects of my life experiences and childhood upbringing before seeking a graduate program. I reasoned that my own life experiences and educational path as an Alaska Native, combined with my research into Indigenous education, was a reasonable basis for constructing the survey questions and variables. Despite several barriers and challenges I have encountered, I have always had an intrinsic drive towards academic achievements for various reasons. It was apparent the survey population of PhD graduates would have an array of motivations, barriers, challenges, influences, and inspirations to share. Some of the measurable variables selected included: (a) tribal ethnicity, (b) type of degree, (c) background, education, (d) urban and/or rural

upbringing, (e) strong cultural identity, (f) first generation undergraduate/graduate college student, (g) interest level in pursuing a PhD degree, (h) financial support, (i) motivational levels during various phases of the upbringing and education, and (j) the existence of a student support network and the influence of mentors.

As the survey was being constructed, it was noticeable there were some sections that had distinct differences and needed more specific category headings. The terms ‘pre’ and ‘during’ were then added to several sections of the survey. The final survey was longer in length than initially anticipated. Editorial suggestions were to go forward with the full-length survey in order to gain the largest possible set of data to analyze, even with the understanding there could potentially be an enormous amount of data to analyze.

A question at the beginning of the survey allowed the potential participants to immediately opt out of the survey if they chose not to participate. The survey was distributed with an introduction email and letter, found in Appendix G, which explained the intent of my research and how it would be used. In one instance, permission was approved to use a participant’s name in an opening chapter statement.

For the display of survey comments, data was removed when they could be tied to personally identifiable information, and broad descriptive terms such as “a graduate at a West Coast university” were used.

In developing the survey, it was important to consider the perspective of the survey participant. A conscious effort was made to consider the ‘insider’ perspective of the PhD graduates while constructing the questions. The graduate committee provided advice during development of the survey instrument. Gathering and analyzing the information helped with

discovering significant findings and emerging themes. The survey questions are located in the Graduate Survey Instrument document in Appendix H.

### **3.6 Quantitative Data Collection Strategy**

The final survey consisted of 66 questions and 18 printed pages. Following the survey protocol, three survey email reminders were sent to survey participants, encouraging them to take the survey within a four to six-week period. While collecting the survey participant data, selected interview participants were participating in both the survey and interview data collection. The interview participants did participate in the survey, too. In mid-October 2014, the final survey was distributed electronically using the Survey Monkey software. Most participants had email access. The few that did not were sent a hard copy survey with a postal service return envelope, of which all came back in a timely manner. Survey participants had an option to put their name in for two Amazon gift card drawings of 75 dollars each. Several participants chose not to put their name in the drawing.

The majority of the survey participants responded within the first four-week period, with a third email reminder that successfully brought in the balance of the responses. The last of the survey results was posted the first week in December 2014. Survey design elements that may account for the high response rate included unique personal interest in the study population and the use of a random prize drawing for an online gift certificate, although many of the participants were not interested in the prize drawings. Reminder emails were also distributed, which helped with receiving nearly all responses from the participants.

This survey instrument proved to be a method for collecting and characterizing firsthand information of Alaska Native scholars' lengthy journeys leading to the attainment of their PhD degree. See Appendix I to view a map of the areas where the Alaska Native PhD graduates



attained their PhD degrees and their degree fields. This shows the first 70 graduates during my data collection phase, of which six PhDs were deceased at that time. Appendix J is a recent USA and PhD map of Alaska Native earned PhDs through early 2018.

The survey instrument and the personal interviews were the foundation of this research. The survey achieved a 95.16% response rate of the 62 respondents who were sent the surveys. Only two participants were not located. It was later discovered that one participant stated his university email inbox had over 10,000 unopened emails.

### **3.7 Designing the Interview Instrument**

The interview questions consisted of twelve questions organized into three main categories. They were influenced by the broader survey questions and the informed recommendation of my instructors, Alaska Native scholars, and my peers. See Appendix K to view the graduate interview instrument.

Interview questions were categorized around the following themes:

- Questions about the doctoral path, from pre-PhD/EdD to the journey (includes cultural background)
- Opportunities gained from attaining a doctoral degree
- The PhD/EdD process-supports, learning styles, and strategies they utilized
- Advice to universities and institutions to graduate and increase Alaska Native PhDs and EdDs
- Open ended questions related to the relevance of having more Alaska Native PhD and EdD graduates, along with any other survey responses they wanted to discuss in more detail

The final interview section was designed to be open ended and give the participants the opportunity to provide advice and perspective to aspiring graduate students and universities that seek to attract and graduate Alaska Natives. The questions are similar to survey questions but allow for more detail and participant voice. At the times of the interviews, the participants had already completed the survey and had an understanding of the research objectives. Pre-interview information was provided to the participants during scheduling to familiarize the PhD with interview purpose and the condition of anonymity.

Interviewees were assigned pseudonyms, rather than sharing their real names. The names used were those of deceased relatives from my mother's family on Kodiak Island, although the name of one living relative was my mom's name, Corrine. I have written permission from her and approval from the IRB office to use her name in place of one of the interview participants. Participants' responses were not connected to their identity. My Informed Consent Form for interview participants was approved through the IRB process, as shown in Appendix L.

The categories of questions were selected based off themes that were found to be relevant in the literature review as well as drawing upon experience from my previous research project (Jones, 2006). Some questions were derived from studies conducted by Brayboy et al. (2012), Rogers (2006), Maher et al, (2004), and Villegas (2006) including one particular finding regarding the importance of Indigenous participants giving back to their communities.

### **3.7.1 Interview participants**

Selection of interview participants was based on a number of factors. It was important to seek a diverse group of participants. Selection criteria used to ensure participant diversity was based on the following: (a) tribal ethnicity, (b) graduation year, (c) gender, (d) degree type, (e) location, (f) urban and/or rural setting, and (g) graduate university size. In order to pre-select

diverse participants, I relied on large scale, extensive web searches and direct inquiries to find out more background information on each one of them prior to carefully selecting them for the interview process. It was difficult to select only eight to ten interview participants, as many more expressed willingness to be interviewed. All of the participants likely had unique personal experiences of their doctoral journey to share. With the benefit of advice from my graduate committee, I adjusted the list to get a balance of participants, which resulted in a finalized list of ten interviewees. Due to time management and complexity, it would not have been wise to interview more than ten participants since I had 59 surveys at 18 pages each to read and analyze.

The participants were from a variety of universities, ranging in size from large universities on one coast to small Ivy League universities. Tribes represented in the interviews were Athabascan, Aleut, Alutiiq, Haida, Inupiaq, Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Yup'ik. (There is currently an Eyak PhD candidate, who will become the first Eyak PhD graduate upon completion). Six of the ten participants grew up in rural communities, while some of them moved to urban communities. Six participants spent secondary years in urban communities. One interview participant grew up in the lower 48, with a mom who grew up in a rural community in Alaska. The selected participants ranged from graduating in the early 1970s to the end of my data collection period, in early 2015. There were men and women interviewed, with four interviews being conducted face-to-face and six via mobile phone and landline. Seven universities were represented, with all ten participants being from a diverse range of degree fields. Religious affiliations were not included, but an occasional participant spoke of Christian values or lack of.

### **3.8 Qualitative Data Collection Strategy**

The mixed methods data collection plan called for supplementing the survey information with individual interviews from a diverse, representative sampling of the Alaska Native PhD population. The hope was to explore a small number of the individual's specific circumstances and detailed experiences through a personal interview process. This approach added to the overall enrichment and validity of the information and served to expand upon trends in the more general survey. The results allowed for complementary insights from the personal interviews and the surveys (Thomas, 2013, p. 105).

Participants who served on my committee were able to give feedback on the interview questions before the interview process. The initial guidance was to keep the interview timeframe between 30 to 45 minutes. Respondents had various degrees of interest in my research subject and in some instances the interview extended into well over an hour of discussion. I benefited from receiving feedback on one of the first trial run interviews, as it was conducted with a member of my committee. The interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 1 hour and 48 minutes. A lesson learned from that interview was that I should not talk so much and focus on listening.

Some interview participants spent much more time conversing about advancing Alaska Native K-16 education and graduate level education, with reflections on their past and personal experiences when seeking a PhD degree. The interview process was intimidating, given every participant was a PhD graduate, but less so than I expected. It was quite enjoyable and beneficial to me.

Some changes made during the entire interview process were to pay better attention to interview length and to make sure to visit with the interviewee before the recorded interview started. Another change I made was to pay attention to the setting of the interview. I discovered

that an empty restaurant during a slow time still has music playing in the background and it was louder than expected. For recording purposes, I made sure I had a quieter location for the following nine interviews. The recorded interviews were structured and in particular order. Participants received the questions in advance of the survey.

My research was influenced by and benefited from the personal histories of interview participants, whose lives stories were at the center of my inquiry.

Structured interviews were recorded with a Sony mini digital recorder, which proved to have a much better audio recording quality than a mobile phone. I put the mobile phone on speaker mode and recorded with my audio recorder on the mobile phone interviews. I also had one interview on a landline speakerphone, while recording. One interview required use of Google Chat on the computer. The small, handheld recording device had a USB pin that popped out and easily plugged into my MacBook Air computer to download the recordings into iTunes and GarageBand. The recording process was easy and enjoyable.

The interviews began October 18 and finished on November 20, 2014, which was approximately four weeks. This occurred simultaneously with the survey timeframe, which started Oct. 13 and ended Nov. 6, 2014, which was approximately three weeks.

### **3.8.1 Transcriptions**

At the completion of the interview phase, I edited most of the recordings for transcription. If some interviews were too long, I clipped and trimmed the audio recordings. The average length of time without the one long interview was 34 minutes. The average length of an interview including the long recording was 45 minutes. This fell within the 30 to 45-minute range that was recommended from committee members.

Apple GarageBand, the audio editing software, was quite efficient to trim most of the audio recordings. Editing proved to be extremely time consuming and required edited audio clips to be saved. I listened to all of the recorded clips several times and referred back to my questions to keep responses limited to the twelve interview questions. I had personal dialogue of my own to delete in most of the recorded interviews too.

Once edits received a final review for quality control, the audio recordings were sent to a reputable academic transcription service to be professionally transcribed. The transcription company converted the MP3 audio files into MS Word format files. Upon receiving their files, I copied and pasted each participant response into MS Excel and sometimes a Word format. I chose to use Excel or Word documents in the thesis. I did not use most of them but did have one form or the other for all of the survey and interview responses. This allowed for options with better organization, easier access, and readability of each response. Lastly, the transcriptions were uploaded into ATLAS.ti, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) platform.

As defined by Thomas, the strength of the structured interview was it could be conducted easily and for the most part, quickly (2013, p. 196). Several of the interview questions were similar to the survey questions but allowed for responses that were more detailed and personalized.

### **3.9 Data Analysis with Software Platforms**

Along with the interviews, the surveys were then rendered into ATLAS.ti for manipulation. Each survey response was exported from Survey Monkey and each survey response was created as a new file. Each file needed to be manually converted to rich text format (RTF), then imported into the ATLAS.ti platform.

Through the software online tutorials, arranged webinars, tutorials with my co-chair, and trial and error, I learned how to navigate ATLAS.ti, which proved to be helpful with locating and categorizing this study's large volume of data. Once data conversions were complete, this data management software simplified the process of coding data into pre-identified categories for analysis. A Color Coding List of Codes with Comment Frequency, located in Appendix M, was created in ATLAS.ti. Thomas (2013), familiar with this platform stated, "Once the descriptive data have been collected they can be examined for the existence of relationships between and among them" (p. 176). The software format had clearly organized headings, color codes, and comment boxes, which allowed for easier navigation with headings and colored codes. ATLAS.ti also allowed me to create a code table showing and prioritizing the frequency of responses for the codes, as shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1:** Code frequency table for Alaska Native PhD graduate survey

Generated Code	Number of written comments
Motivation during PhD journey	160
Resilience and overcoming challenges and barriers	104
Challenges and barriers-during PhD journey	83
Motivation pre-PhD	78
Motivation to pursue a PhD	73
Suggestions to graduate students	71
Supports-Social	65
Self-description of journey	59
Suggestions to universities re: support to Alaska Native students	58
Benefits and opportunities with a PhD	57
Supports-Academic	56
Self-description of PhD attainment	55
Reason to attain a PhD	45
Cultural identity and influences	43
Mentoring suggestions to graduate students	41
Study strategy suggestions to grad students	41
Suggestions ways to increase PhD graduates	41

Table 3.1 continued

"Giving back" to community and people	41
Advice to overcome challenges outside of the university system	37
Mentorships	36
Opportunities presented from attaining a PhD	30
Peer support for motivation	29
Supports-Cultural	29
Initial time frame regarding interest for attaining a PhD	29
Suggestions to universities re: mentoring support for Alaska Native graduate students	28
Motivation-Passion for degree program and research	27
Cultural connections during PhD journey	27
Challenges and barriers-pre-PhD program	25
Extrinsic motivational factors to attain a PhD	23
Low motivation moments-Pre-PhD	20
Lack of support from institutions or parent/guardians	20
Influential people contributing to attaining my doctoral degree	19
Social media/Technology supports during journey	17
Interesting history of upbringing influencing motivation or high self-expectations	13
Supports-Financial	12
Parents/guardians high expectations	12
Learning strategies	11
Participant structure from programs/instructors	11
Learning Styles adaptations during PhD	10
Family support and role during journey	10
Environmental space for studying	9
Background-Rural upbringing	8
Unmotivated-pre-PhD	8
Stereotypes and presumptions-pre-PhD	8
Supports-Non-academic while working on PhD	7
Family support growing up	7
Intrinsic motivational factors to attain a PhD	7
Frequency of academic supports	7
Path interesting leading up to PhD	7
Frequency of social supports/networking during program	7
Lack of Cultural connections during PhD journey	6
Funding	6
Competitive nature pre-PhD	6
Background-Rural and urban upbringing	6
Indigenous language speaker	4



Table 3.1 continued

Suggestions to Alaska Natives organizations	4
Motivation for desire to move from home	3
Probation during undergraduate	3
Participant structure	3
Native corporation support	3
Parent/guardian education levels	3
Low motivation moments during PhD journey	3
Background-Suburban upbringing	2
Institutional successes that work for Alaska Native students	2
Post degree miscellaneous	2
Background-Urban upbringing	2
Demographics of PhD graduates	1
Racism or institutional racism	1
Challenge professional student	1
Competitive nature during PhD	1
Non-traditional student in undergraduate	1
Insider/outsider	1
Stress high during PhD journey	1

I was able to identify important participant concepts from the codes. I could also easily navigate ATLAS.ti to find codes related to particular themes, as I moved forward to identify emerging themes relevant to my research questions. Appendix N has a master list of generated codes with associated groups in no particular order. I used that list to look for themes and used it for initial sorting and viewing my data.

I utilized another strategy for organizing my data before analysis by using an “old-school” and hands-on technique, which fit my kinesthetic-tactile learning style. I printed out every question with responses in a Word table format. I utilized a similar process with my master’s thesis and with another interview project, however I did not have the Survey Monkey platform at that time. I took each exported Survey Monkey question with numerical data and comments and created a Word document with a table for each data set question. I converted each

response category from “text to table” for a linear look and easier readability. As an example of how I set up data for each question, one document I created was, “Question 46: How has your PhD benefited you today?” I then took all of the responses on each question document and began highlighting the key words in each document. I used colors for similar themes within each question number document. I assembled the emerging themes in descending order, with the theme headings boldfaced and bullets (or table format) of each response below the appropriate category. This system helped me see which category in each question would be deemed important enough to give commentary from the participants. I kept each theme organized electronically in a “code table with quotes” e-folder and I had hard copy, labeled, manila folders for every question category, which proved to be the best organizational system for me.

### **3.10 Strategies for Data Analysis**

The care, design, and perseverance in data collection resulted in a rich data set, ideally suited for qualitative analysis. The framework for analysis involved creating structure around the raw data and discovering relationships and inferences largely from the respondents. Creswell (2012) states, “Analysis consists of taking the data apart and putting it together to summarize it” (p. 10). Survey questions were generated and prioritized with committee and peer input. Individual questions were sorted around themes (examples: motivation and supports) to facilitate locating and coding of variables. A significant amount of work went into assembling and validating the data set before the task of exploring the variables of successful Alaska Native PhDs could begin.

An important part of the coding process was to clump the responses into themes, based on the groups of questions, as shown in the color-coded table. Careful consideration during the initial survey question development made the coding process easier. In other instances, post-

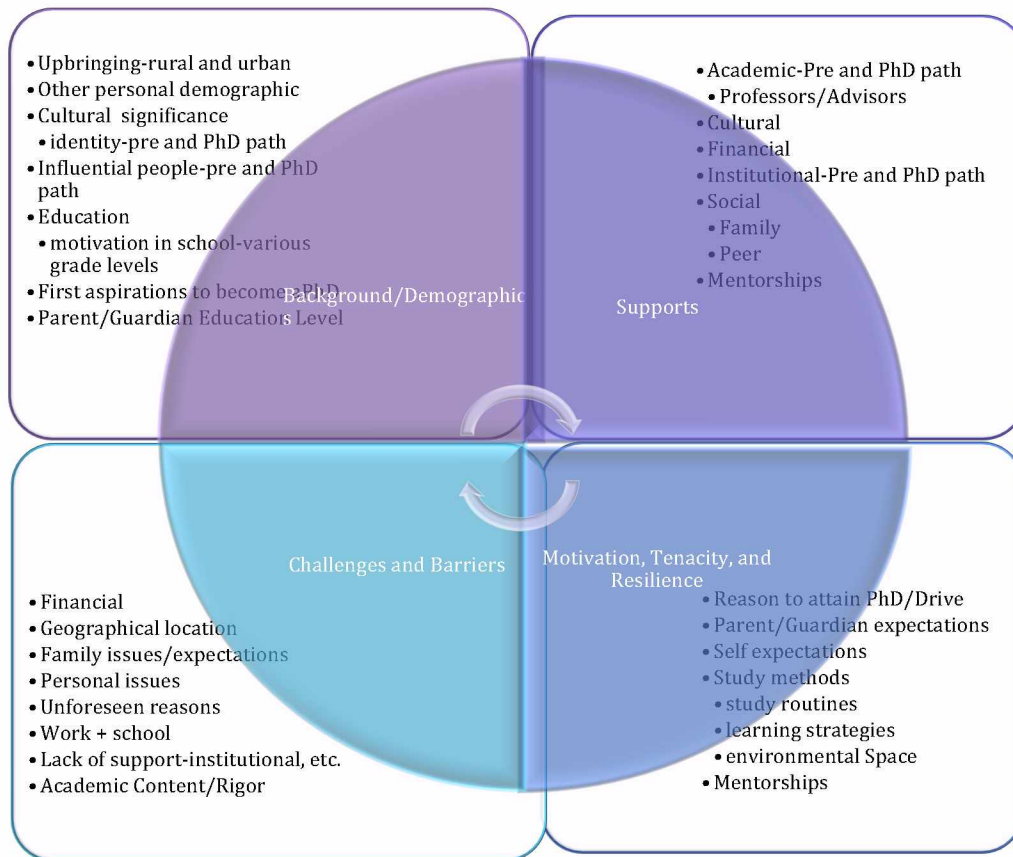
survey themes emerged that would be identified and evaluated for significance. This study benefited significantly from ATLAS.ti data processing capabilities and Survey Monkey platform's analysis exporting option. From both the survey and interview data, several primary themes emerged from the 264 printed pages of responses, which eventually included 1,135 quotations, and 76 codes.

As I conducted my research, I tried to pay attention to some advice from Indigenous scholar, Shawn Wilson, who spoke at one of my graduate course sessions. He said to have faith and it will all be as it is meant to be. He also said we will get different messages out of his text, *Research is Ceremony* (Wilson, 2008, p. 134). In the end of my analysis, it finally came together for me, but it did take a long time, as there was an overwhelming amount of data to sort, organize, and prioritize.

Several forms of mixed methods data analysis strategies were utilized during the analysis phase of this project. One method I used was Greene's (2007) "data correlation and comparison" strategy. This method of analysis was well suited for my study with the survey and interview questions both having a similar theme. I was able to generate some similar themes from overlooking and categorizing my codes. Greene's strategy suggested "interactive analysis" with having stopping points and looking back at the raw data, along with my questions and comments I wrote beside the questions sheets as discussed earlier. Given the extensive amount of data, that was a good method for me to use to analyze my data, as I had many stopping points. Following Greene's suggestion, I intentionally stopped and looked closely at my sources of data to see if there were relationships between the surveys and interviews. I worked from the assumption that there would be common factors.

Another data analysis strategy used was from Thomas's (2013) "constant comparison method" (p. 235). He describes this method as "going through your data again and again, which defines 'constant,' comparing each element, phrase or sentence, or paragraph with all of the other elements" (p. 235). I would frequently look back at my research questions and make sure I was addressing my questions. I understood the importance of looking at the data repeatedly over time, because some answers to the research questions took a great deal of time for me to process and explain. This was of particular relevance in my mixed methods study, as the research data included many recurring words and phrases. An example using this analysis strategy of theme and sub-theme was "supports", which split into sub theme examples including "academic", "social", and "financial" supports. I created a theme map in the form of four quadrants. Figure 3.1 shows themed chart based on data from surveys and interviews. The theme mapping process helped to make sense of the data, following constant comparative method analysis, with looking

at data repeatedly over long period of time.



**Figure 3.1: Theme mapping of Alaska Native PhD graduate qualitative and quantitative data**

Figure 3.1 provides a structure, based on the data for three of my research questions, which are presented in Chapters Four and Five.

For the last research question, I utilized a type of ‘network analysis,’ as described by Thomas (2013). He states, “Network analysis shows how themes are related to one another in a nested arrangement, with each branch holding a branch of other ideas. In this sense it provides a hierarchical organization of the ideas contained in your data” (p. 236). The data collection comprises several quotations supporting various themes that were relative to the participants’ advice to current and aspiring Alaska Native PhD students and to universities seeking to increase and attain Alaska Native graduate students. Figure 3.2 is an example of a simplified version of a

network analysis.



***Figure 3.2: Network analysis of Suggestions and Advice from Alaska Native PhD graduates to Alaska Native graduate students and universities***

This example with Alaska Native PhD graduate responses related to ‘suggestions for Alaska Native graduate students’ and shows examples of their suggestions. Themes emerged from the plethora of suggestions. The themes were disaggregated, providing data that were more specific. For my purposes, this figure was helpful with this project. The information on suggestions from Alaska Native PhDs visualized in Figure 3.2 is located in Chapter Seven, but I wanted to share the analysis process used to present my findings, as creating visual figures showing relationships was an important part of my analysis process as I investigated specific areas of the research.

### **3.11 Challenges During the Data Collection Process**

The main challenge during the data collection was the wide geographic distribution of survey and interview participants, which made communications difficult. Initially, there was limited contact information for the participants. I had to find addresses and other information by communicating with potential, and sometimes distant, connections of the participants. The data collection involved extensive web searches and numerous phone calls throughout the U.S.

An unexpected challenge was tracking the leads of potential new Alaska Native PhDs, only to discover the individuals had not completed their degree work or were in a different graduate program. In several instances my leads resulted in discovering individuals held honorary doctoral degrees, a master's degree rather than a perceived PhD degree, or a different type of doctoral degree (i.e., JD or MD). While there is a wealth of research knowledge that could be learned from all Alaska Native graduate students, for data consistency it was necessary to limit this research to earned Alaska Native PhD (and EdD) graduates only.

One challenge I encountered at the beginning of the data collection was not being able to contact the remaining two participants of the 64 living Alaska Native PhD graduates in the fall of 2014. I put a great deal of time and effort into trying to obtain contact information for Alaska Native scholars #63 and #64 (not in that order on the Alaska Native PhD list). I even went as far as Google searching university presentations the missing participants gave with research teams. I contacted a co-presenter of one of my missing scholars, with no success. The co-presenter said the scholar was extremely private in her professional field due to the nature of her type of private practice. He stated he was not surprised at how difficult it was to find this person. I could not find another unknown participant. I thought I had found information on this person in either Australia or Southwestern United States, but no such luck. Aside from the research challenges, I

was very pleased and surprised with the number of participants I was able to locate.

Another challenge at the end of my data collection phase was not being familiar with several types of software or programs that assisted with data collection and analysis. I was not familiar with designing a survey with the Survey Monkey platform, nor with converting data collected to the program called rich text format (RTF). I was unfamiliar with the ATLAS.ti platform and the tutorials were sometimes hard to follow. I received assistance from my co-chair committee member on more than one occasion. She tutored me in person at a conference, as well as Google chatting and Skyping with me during the collection and analysis phases. We also talked on the phone and emailed each other.

During the data analysis, I had the challenge of redundancy with my data. This project had a large amount of accumulated data, adding to the lengthy duration of time it took for me to write. That presented a challenge with using quotations in sections more than once. I attempted to highlight quotations I used, but I was not consistent and that contributed to the redundancy problem.

Lastly, I was a bit intimidated by my pool of participants as an astute body of Alaska Native scholars with the terminal degree with a great deal of knowledge to share.

### **3.12 Ethical Considerations**

The study's data integrity and concerns with data collection bias were supported by the acceptance of the survey and interview instruments by the IRB and the assistance of my committee members.

Care was taken to prevent bias in the survey and interview design. I am an Alaska Native educator and a doctoral candidate, which theoretically provides valuable insight, but also created the potential for prejudice in both analysis and interpretation. I had to separate myself from being



an insider, since I also attained two graduate degrees while working and having a family. However, I was not a terminal degree holder, which is an entirely different journey than a master's degree. I needed to make sure my experiences during my graduate school journeys did not create bias with my data results.

With few exceptions, I did not have a prior relationship with my study population. This insulated the study from researcher bias. A term that may be related to this in ethnographic studies research is "intellectual distance," mentioned by Brayboy and Deyhle (2000). They discussed the paradox of being a participant-observer. There needs to be a balance of fine separation between the participant and observer. Brayboy shared his example of being a good researcher and a good Indian. Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) argued, "Participant observation is difficult, because one must work hard at striking a balance between participating and observing" (p. 3). They cited works of Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) who stated, "There must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual 'distance'" (p. 2592). As an Alaska Native PhD candidate researching Alaska Native PhDs, I must be cognizant of this balance with my participants so my data collection and results would not be biased in any way.

I think this thought has some validity, although it may be a challenge to maintain that distance, as relationships with Alaska Native colleagues, peers, and participants is vital in the postsecondary arena, even when research is within the Alaska Native networks. I was deeply aware of the trust placed in me by the population I was researching. Given this trust, I felt an added cultural responsibility to base my results on solid data analysis. It was pertinent I made sure their personal voices from survey comments and responses were accurately heard to strengthen my data validity and reliability. I was also aware of the significance of this unique project and valued the time and effort the participants put into the surveys and interviews.

Throughout this work, I was challenged to honor that cultural responsibility while not allowing this responsibility to create research bias.

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## **Chapter Four: Demographics, Experiences and Motivations of Research Participants Prior To Their PhD Program**

I really wanted to show folks back home that they could get a PhD too. I wanted to be able to go back home and tell people that their kids could get PhDs, and how important it is for people in our region to become educated so that we could lift ourselves out of the depression and alcoholism and drug abuse cycle that we seem to be stuck in.

When I was frustrated with the long hours, I would remember that our people survived for thousands of years in a harsh place by being persistent, hardworking, and doing what it took to get the job done. When I was really down, I would find somewhere quiet and ask my ancestors who have passed before me for help.

~Alaska Native PhD participant

The testimony above from one of the Alaska Native PhD graduates had some common demographics and traits with many other participants: raised and attended school in Alaska, motivated, resilient, culturally spiritual, and had the desire to give back upon completion of the PhD degree. The following chapters present the findings of my research, rooted in the firsthand experiences and testimony of Alaska Native PhD graduate participants. The collective survey and interview data is authentic, unedited testimony from nearly all of the living Alaska Native PhD graduates, which is the emphasis of my research.

Designing the survey and interview demanded a collection of questions that allowed for the participants' voices to resonate. A vital objective was to bring out what the participants had experienced, their challenges, motivational factors, successes, and their suggestions and advice to universities and Alaska Native graduate students. My literature review documents contributed to the survey design. Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) addressed the importance of participant voices in their research by stating, "These points of interest were clarified further by the participants in

the study, who gave us feedback on our thoughts and actions--and directed us into a more accurate vision of their lived experiences and their meanings” (p. 5).

All data is a combination of responses from the 59 surveys and ten personal interviews up to early 2015. Chapter Four begins with findings from the background data from the survey and interview participants. The first research question addresses common background and pre-PhD data of Alaska Native PhD graduates. The next significant theme addresses motivational factors of the participants’ pre-PhD journey. Following, survey and interview participants’ motivational factors that led to their decision to seek a PhD are presented. The latter part of Chapter Four directly addresses the challenges and barriers Alaska Native PhD graduates encountered before their PhD journey. Chapter Five will share experiences and motivational components during their PhD program.

#### **4.1 Background Demographics of Survey and Interview PhD Participants**

I hoped to find common factors influencing the success of this small group of Alaska Native PhDs. This population is mostly first-generation master’s degree and/or PhD degree recipients. Intrinsic reasons for pursuing their PhD degrees vary from person to person and tribe to tribe. Alaska Native degree holders vary across ethnicities. This research looks at what relevance the distribution of degrees may say to understand the future of Alaska Native scholars and research.

During the data collection up to early 2015, 66% of the Alaska Native PhDs have an interest in fields related to their cultural traditions, environment, sciences, and education, which are integral to survival and sustainability of Indigenous people and future generations.

Survey and interview data show patterns and relationships that could be structured into my findings and summary sections. All respondents were located throughout the United States,

with one residing overseas. With extensive investigation, it was determined that there was a strong likelihood that one of the two unknown contacts lived on another continent. Of the living Alaska Native PhD graduates, 48% resided in Alaska at the time of the survey and 52% lived outside of Alaska. The interview participants spanned the United States, from Alaska to the East Coast.

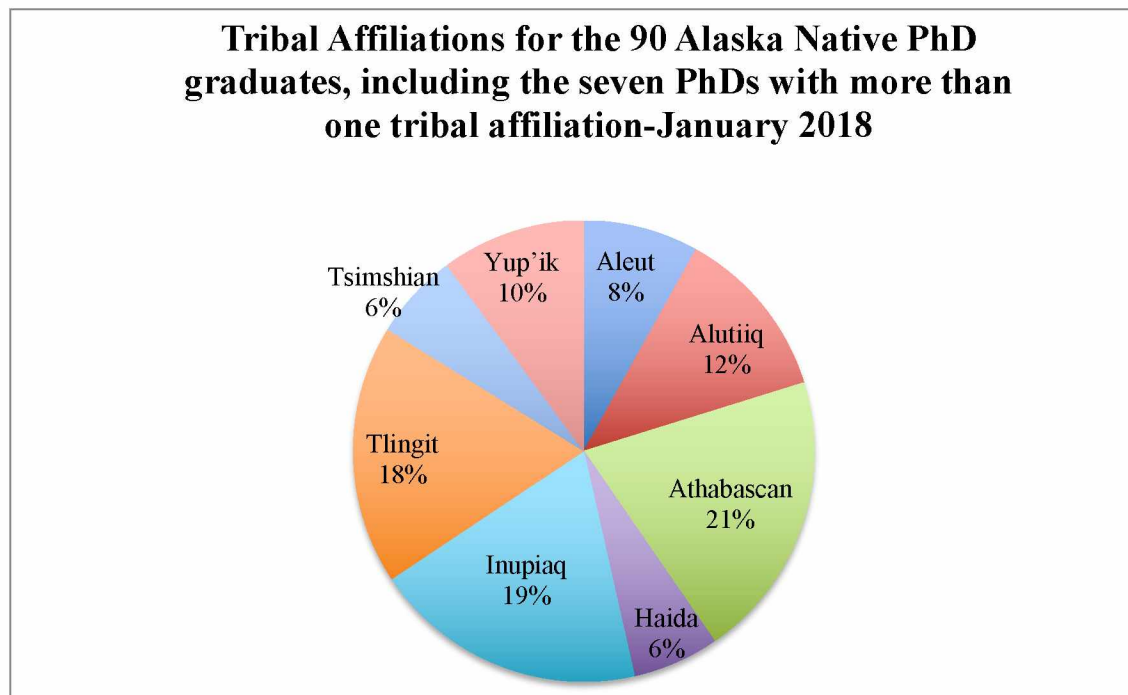
Eight ethnic groups are represented in the list of Alaska Native PhD graduates. Absent from this list are the Cup'ik and Eyak ethnic tribes. Table 4.1 shows earned Alaska Native PhD graduates up to research conducted to Spring 2015 from Jones updated list of 2015, originating from Perea's Fall 2013 published list.

**Table 4.1:** Ethnic tribes of Alaska Native PhD graduates to early 2015

Alaska Native Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Aleut	6	8.6%
Alutiiq	11	15.7%
Athabascan	12	17.1%
Haida	2	2.8%
Iñupiaq	14	20.0%
Tlingit	11	15.7%
Tsimshian	1	1.4%
Yup'ik	7	10.0%
Aleut + Yup'ik	1	1.4%
Aleut + Athabascan	1	1.4%
Athabascan + Tlingit	1	1.4%
Athabascan + Yup'ik	1	1.4%
Haida + Tlingit	1	1.4%
Tsimshian + Tlingit + Yup'ik	1	1.4%
Total as of early 2015	70	

The table shows that the majority of PhD graduates were tribal members of Athabascan, Iñupiaq, Alutiiq, Tlingit, and Yup'ik tribes. Note ethnic categories are not labeled with specific tribal names, such as Gwich'in Athabascan or Unangax Aleut. Research from Perea's (2013)

original list did not give more detailed specific tribal affiliation, which I also did. Tsimshian Indians in Alaska are a small tribe, mainly living at their fairly recent settlement of “New Metlakatla” in southeast Alaska, with the majority of their ancestors still living in Canada. The migration of Tsimshians in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century brought approximately 900+ Tsimshians to New Metlakatla. A Tsimshian interviewee stated, “Being from Metlakatla, our culture is still being revised and renewed from when we moved over from British Columbia in 1887.” Given the small number of Tsimshian PhD graduates, his statement was encouraging and confirms the significance of increasing the number of Alaska Natives involved in research and language revitalization. Two Tlingit PhD graduates were also American Indian tribal members. One was Tlingit and Oglala Sioux and the other was Tlingit Zuni. Figure 4.1 below shows the tribal origin and identities of Alaska Native PhDs from more recent data up to early 2018.



***Figure 4.1: Tribal Origins and Identities of Alaska Native PhDs up to January 2018***

The assembly of data in Figure 4.1 relied on a mixture of survey responses and independent research. The survey (Q61) allowed the interviewee to select multiple responses in self-identifying tribal origin. Of the 54 scholars who elected to self-report tribal identity, the survey resulted in 95 selections. This suggests a high degree of multi-tribal self-identity on the part of survey respondents. Given the potential importance of a tribal self-identity dataset, as a snapshot in time, this question was supplemented by an extensive amount of research to reveal the tribal origins of the 16 unreported Alaska Native PhDs. The tribal origins of this group of 16 individuals were confirmed either through direct personal contact or through a trusted second party verification approach (example: utilizing ANCSA corporation or university demographic data). Using self-reporting, combined with independent verification through institutional datasets, there is a very high degree of confidence in the statistics presented in Figure 4.1.

Table 4.2 displays Perea's (2013) original list of earned Alaska Native PhD graduates, with 20 additional names added to it up to spring of 2015. Ethnicities are provided. This is the Alaska Native Earned PhD list used in this project.

**Table 4.2:** Updated table of Alaska Natives with earned PhD or EdD, Early 2015

The original table of 57 graduates was created by Jessica Bissett Perea, Ph.D. (Perea, 2013). Since Fall 2013, this table receives updates from Alberta Jones, with Perea's permission. The table shows the list of earned Alaska Native PhD and EdD graduates. It displays information up to early 2015.

Alaska Native PhD or EdD Earned Graduates

**Bold** = currently works in UA system (early 2015) (or retired from UA system)

^ = previously worked in UA system + = currently works outside of Alaska

× = currently works in Alaska (not in UA system) \* = deceased

<b>Name (Cultural Affiliation)</b>	<b>Year: Degree, Institution</b>	<b>Field</b>
<b>1. James Simpson (Athabascan) ^</b>	1970: Ed.D., University of Washington, WA	Education
2. Michael F. Tillman (Tlingit) +	1972: Ph.D., University of Washington, WA	Fisheries Science
3. Raymond Carroll (Athabascan) +	1972: Ph.D., University of Michigan	Physics
4. *William Demmert (Tlingit/Oglala Sioux) +^	1973: Ed.D., Harvard University, MA	Education
5. * <b>Louis Jacquot (Tlingit) ^</b>	1973: Ph.D., University of Oregon	Education
6. * <b>Paul A Goodwin (Iñupiaq) ^</b>	1979: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Physics



Table 4.2 continued

7. Robert D Stearns (Alutiiq) +	1983: Ph.D., Stanford University, CA	Anthropology
8. Elizabeth Parent (Athabascan) +	1984: Ph.D., Stanford University, CA	Education
9. Lora L Johnson (Alutiiq) ×	1984: Ph.D., Brown University, RI	Classics
10. Larri Fredericks (Athabascan) +	1990: Ph.D., University of CA, Berkeley	Medical Anthropology
11. <b>John Weise (Yup'ik)</b> ^	1990: Ph.D., University of Oregon	Education
12. Ted Wright (Tlingit) ×	1990: Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University	Political Science
13. Dorothy Pender (Iñupiaq) ×	1991: Ph.D., Stanford University, CA	Electrical Engineering
14. Jeanmarie Crumb (Athabascan) ×	1992: Ed.D., University of Southern California	Education
15. <b>*Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley (Yup'ik)</b> ^	1993: Ph.D., University of British Columbia, Canada	Education
16. Brian Wescott (Athabascan/Yup'ik) +	1993: Ph.D., Yale University, CT	American Studies
17. <b>Milo Adkison (Yup'ik)</b>	1994: Ph.D., University of Washington	Fisheries
18. <b>Jeane Breinig (Haida)</b>	1995: Ph.D., University of Washington	English
19. Edna Ahgeak MacLean (Iñupiaq) ×	1995: Ph.D., Stanford University, CA	Linguistics
20. Catherine Swan Reimer (Iñupiaq) +	1995: Ed.D., George Washington University, DC	Education (Counseling)
21. Jay Corwin (Tlingit) +	1995: Ph.D., Florida State University	Modern Languages
22. <b>Dolores Garza (Haida)</b> ^+	1996: Ph.D., University of Delaware	Marine Science
23. Shari Huhndorf (Yup'ik) +	1996: Ph.D., New York University	Comparative Literature
24. <b>Maria Williams (Tlingit)</b>	1996: Ph.D., University of Calif., Los Angeles	Ethnomusicology
25. <b>Gordon Pullar (Alutiiq Sugpiaq)</b> ^×	1997: Ph.D., The Union Institute, Ohio	Anthropology
26. Denise Dillard (Iñupiaq) ×	1997: Ph.D., Colorado State University	Counseling Psychology
27. Cheryl Ann Denesha Wilga (Athabascan)	1997: Ph.D., University of Southern Florida	Biological Sciences
28. <b>Phyllis Fast (Athabascan)</b> ^+	1998: Ph.D., Harvard University, MA	Anthropology
29. Mary Jean Longley (Iñupiaq) +	1998: Ed.D., Portland State University	Education
30. Joyce Shales (Tlingit) ×	1998: Ph.D., University of British Columbia, Canada	Education
31. Bernice Tetpon (Iñupiaq) ^×	1998: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Cultural Education
32. Rosita Worl (Tlingit) × ^	1998: Ph.D., Harvard University, MA	Anthropology
33. <b>*Deanna Paniataaq Kingston (Iñupiaq)</b> +	1999: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Anthropology
34. <b>Kanaqluk George Charles (Yup'ik)</b>	2000: Ph.D., University of CA, Santa Barbara	Religious Studies
35. Linda Crothers (Athabascan) +	2000: Ph.D., University of CA, Santa Barbara	Psychology
36. Sven Haakanson, Jr. (Alutiiq) +	2000: Ph.D., Harvard University, MA	Anthropology
37. Steven Verney (Tsimshian) +	2000: Ph.D., University of CA, San Diego	Clinical Psychology
38. Kamilla Venner (Athabascan) +	2001: Ph.D., University of New Mexico	Psychology
39. <b>Dalee Sambo Dorough (Iñupiaq)</b>	2002: Ph.D., University of British Columbia, Canada	Law

Table 4.2 continued

40. Lisa Rey Thomas (Tlingit) +	2004: Ph.D., University of Washington,	Clinical Psychology
41. Dian Millon (Athabascan) +	2004: Ph.D., University of Calif. Berkeley	Ethnic Studies
42. *Mary Grantham Campbell (Iñupiaq)	2005: Ph.D. Stanford University, CA	Anthropology and Education
43. Alexis Bunten (Yup'ik/Aleut) +	2006: Ph.D., University of Calif., Los Angeles	Anthropology
44. <b>Beth Leonard (Athabascan)</b>	2007: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Cross-Cultural Studies
45. Sarah (Hicks) Kastelic (Alutiiq)+	2008: Ph.D., Washington University in St. Louis	Social Work
46. Eve Tuck (Unangax Aleut) +	2008: Ph.D., City University of New York	Education
47. Cayenne Nikoosh Carlo (Athabascan/Tlingit) +	2008: Ph.D., University of Calif., San Diego	Neurosciences/Molecular Biology
48. Jordan Paul Lewis (Aleut) +^	2009: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Cross-Cultural Community
49. Kathryn Milligan-Mhyre (Iñupiaq)	2009: Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison	Microbiology
50. Malia Villegas (Alutiiq/Sugpiaq) +	2010: Ed.D., Harvard University, MA	Education
51. Nancy Jean Furlow (Tlingit) × ^	2010: Ph.D., University of Calif., Santa Barbara	Religious Studies
52. <b>Theresa John (Yup'ik)</b>	2010: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies
53. <b>Roy F. Roehl II (Aleut)</b>	2010: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Education & Mathematics
54. <b>April G.L. Counciller (Alutiiq) ^×</b>	2010: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Interdisciplinary
55. <b>Walkie Kumaggaq Charles (Yup'ik)</b>	2011: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Applied Linguistics
56. Jessica Bissett Perea (Athabascan)	2011: Ph.D., University of Calif., Los Angeles	Musicology
57. Thomas Michael Swensen (Alutiiq)+	2011: Ph.D., University of Calif., Berkeley	Comparative Ethnic Studies
58. Kutraluk J.D.Bolton (Iñupiaq)	2011: Ph.D., Stanford University, CA	Anthropology
59. Nadia Jackinsky-Sethi (Alutiiq) ×	2012: Ph.D., University of Washington, WA	Art History
60. Alisha Drabek (Alutiiq)×	2012: Ph.D., University of Alaska, Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies
61. Darin Woolpert (Alutiiq)+	2012: Ph.D., San Diego State U/UC, San Diego, CA	Language & Communicative Disorder
62. Tina Woods (Unangax Aleut) ×	2013: Ph.D., University of Alaska (Joint Anchorage- Fairbanks)	Clinical Community Psychology
63. Adelheid Herrmann (Athabascan-Dena'ina) ×	2013: Ed.D., University of LaVerne, CA	Organizational Leadership
64. Jeremy Gilbreath (Aleut)+	2013: Ph.D., Uniformed Services University, MD	Emerging Infectious Diseases
65. Kenneth Samuelson (Tsimshian/Tlingit/Yup'ik)+	2013: Ed.D., East Tennessee State U., TN	School System Leadership
66. Miranda Belardi-Lewis (Tlingit/Zuni) +	2013: Ph.D., University of Washington, WA	Information Science
67. <b>Edgar Blatchford (Iñupiaq)</b>	2013: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Interdisciplinary Studies

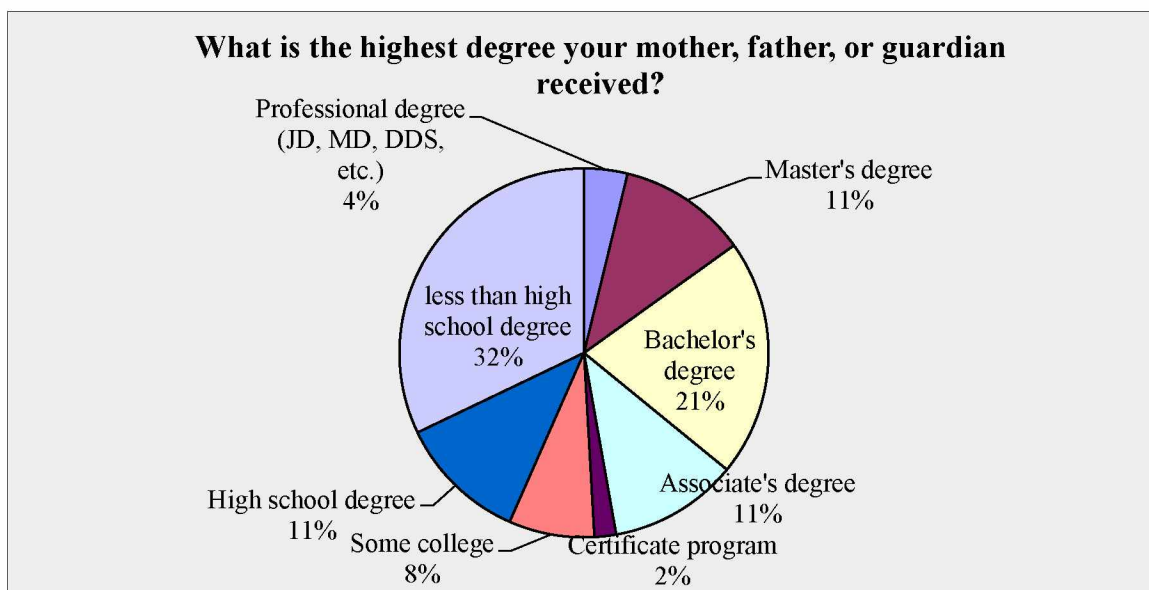
Table 4.2 continued

68. Cara Burnidge+ (Aleut)	2013: PhD., Florida State University	Religion
69. Gail Cheney (Haida/Tlingit)	2014: Ph.D., Antioch University, WA	Leadership and Change
70. Barb QasuGlana Amarok (Iñupiaq) <sup>x ^</sup>	2015: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies

The survey respondents who chose to state their ethnicity produced slightly different data. Anecdotal information suggests that the number of Alaska Native and white ancestry is likely higher than just an Alaska Native ancestry of the PhD graduates. Given the controversy of blood quantum in Indigenous cultures, a question on the percentage of Alaska Native ancestry was not addressed. I did not feel I would get a significant response to a ‘percentage of tribal blood’ question, as that can be a research topic in itself.

When given the opportunity for multiple responses on a question asking to identify all ethnicities and tribal origins, the highest response (29%) was White/Caucasian, followed by Athabascan (22%), Yup’ik (20%), Tlingit (20%), Alutiiq (19%), Iñupiaq (17%), Aleut (13%), and Haida (6%) and Tsimshian (4%).

Figure 4.2 shows highest education level attained by Alaska Native PhD parents.



***Figure 4.2: Highest education levels of parents of Alaska Native PhD participants surveyed up to spring of 2015***

One third of the students' parents did not complete high school. Only 4% of the respondents' parents had terminal graduate degrees. Parents with bachelor's degrees made up 21% of the population. Thirty two percent of the participants declared their parents had less than a high school degree. An inspirational testimony from one of the PhD graduates stated, "My dad in particular pushed me to go to graduate school...I am the first in my family to graduate from high school much less earn a master's or PhD."

Six participants' parents had a high school degree. Eleven participants had a parent with some college credits up to an associate degree. Six scholars had a parent with a master's degree. One participant had a parent with a PhD degree. Following a conversation with the PhD graduate, it was discovered that her son, also a PhD, attended Ivy League universities for both his undergraduate and graduate degrees, with several Ivy League options available to him.

An Ivy League interview participant had a rich experience with his rural upbringing and his language during his formative years. He stated, “My mother never went to school and so ... I mostly used my native language at home and learned English outside the house.”

Seventy-one percent of the participants spoke either none or very little of their Native tongue, with only a small portion (11%) having fluency in an Alaska Native language. Fifteen percent said they spoke their Alaska Native language fluently or semi-fluently. One participant stated, “I also speak English!” One other participant said, “When I am creative, I think in Yup’ik structure.” Another stated, “I’m originally from a Southwestern rural community, which is located on the Yukon Delta. And I am Yup’ik. I was born and raised speaking Yugtun, which is the language of both my parents.” It was encouraging to note that 9.3% stated they were learners of their language.

The group of Alaska Native PhD scholars grew up in a variety of places, according to the 53 responses to this question. Seventy-five percent of the successful Alaska Native PhD graduates indicated they were raised exclusively in the state of Alaska, with the highest majority (40%) raised in rural Alaska. Seventeen percent of the respondents grew up in a rural community and moved to an urban area during their formative years. Nineteen percent of the respondents grew up in urban communities, including the Alaskan cities of Anchorage and Fairbanks. Urban, suburban and rural were not clearly defined in the survey and interview, which may have had a slight effect on the data set. Of the 17% raised outside of Alaska, 11% lived in rural and suburban areas, while 6% lived in urban out of state dwellings. The suburban areas in this research are communities that are larger than small rural communities and they have access to more shopping opportunities and hospital care, although they are not accessible on the road system to get to the large cities. Approximately 30% of the participants who responded selected a

combination of options. The following paragraphs capture statements about their upbringing experiences. To secure anonymity, the names of their communities are removed and replaced with a region.

The highest percentage of Alaska Native scholars grew up in rural Alaska. Rural is also commonly referred to as “off the road system” or “the bush” by many Alaskans. One interview participant, who teaches on the East Coast, responded: “I’m originally from a Southeastern rural community in Alaska. I was raised there from the age of three on. Before that, my family lived in a Northwestern Alaskan community.” Another respondent stated, “I grew up identifying as Iñupiaq because I was in [a rural community] and my mother was always present.” Besides growing up in rural Alaska, it was apparent that culture was an important part of their upbringing.

One interview participant had an intriguing life story, often representing Alaska Natives and subsistence throughout his professional career, although he was born and raised in an urban setting. He remarked:

I was born, grew up in, and educated in a city in the Northwestern region of Alaska. And I’ve never lived in any one of the Indian villages, although it’s interesting to me that most of my career has been, in one way or another, involved working with Alaska (Natives) on their whaling and subsistence needs.

Another interview participant was born and raised in [city], graduated from a West Coast university and taught for approximately ten years at another university in the Southwest region of the U.S. She then moved back to Alaska and is a contributing faculty member in postsecondary education and Native education.

A participant who teaches at a Lower 48 university stated, "...I am what we call Alutiiq<sup>1</sup> right now. I am an Alaska Native born and raised. My entire childhood, I was in Alaska and I moved down near to the contiguous part of the nation when I was about 21." This individual is actively involved in Native studies and gives Indigenous students a voice at his lower 48 institution.

Although participants generally share a mixture of rural and urban experiences, many continue to support their Indigenous culture and background.

Some common factors emerged with Alaska Native PhD graduates regarding their age at graduation, percentage of full time status and marital status. Fifty-nine percent of the research participants received their degree by age 40, with the second largest age grouping (22%) earning their degree between 41-50 years old. One Alaska Native graduate was over 60 years old. Seventy-nine percent of the population pursued their degree as full-time or near full-time students. The majority of the study population (57%) were either married or living with a companion while PhD students.

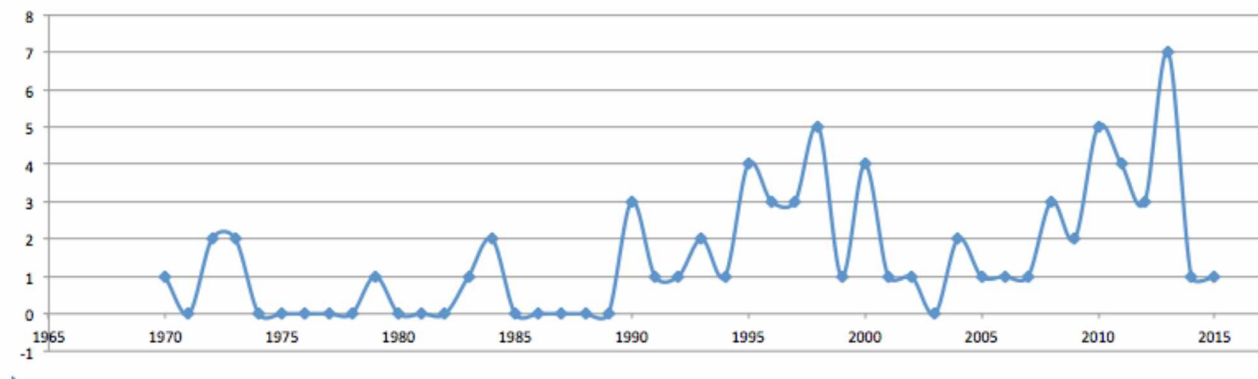
The study investigated the length of time necessary to complete the program and graduate. Thirty-nine percent of the PhD students finished the program in 5 years or less, 35% took between 5-7 years, and 26% took longer than 7 years of work to reach graduation.

The earliest date a PhD degree conferred was 1972 and the most recent was early 2015. Figure 4.3 is a linear marked scatter graph of the number of Alaska Native PhD graduates and

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<sup>1</sup> The Sugpiaq term for Aleut is *Alutiiq*, which means "real people." However, the Alutiiq tribe is different than the Aleut tribe, as stated in the Alutiiq Museum Archaeological Repository, n.d.).

the year they graduated up to early 2015. The data shows there have been more graduates after the mid-1990s, which coincides with more interest and efforts in Native Education.

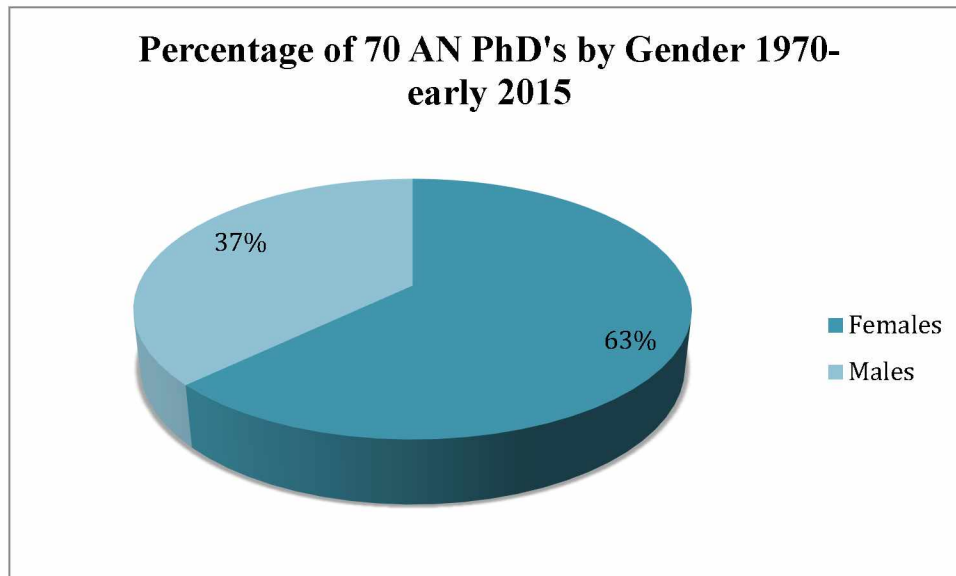


***Figure 4.3: Alaska Native PhD graduate numbers and their graduation year to 2015***

This research did not look for a correlation of ‘time to degree’ (TTD) regarding full and part time status of Alaska Native PhD graduates, as Gillingham et al. (1991) discovered. This may be something to pursue for future research since there was a range of timeframes for completion time to degree. Regarding age when graduating, the Gillingham study (1991) revealed an average age of 30.7 years old and the most common age range for Alaska Native PhD graduates was between ages 31-40 for 42.6% of the participants.

Figure 4.4 shows a chart of male and female Alaska Native PhD graduates, based on the expansive list of 70 Alaska Native PhD graduates, from 1970-early 2015.

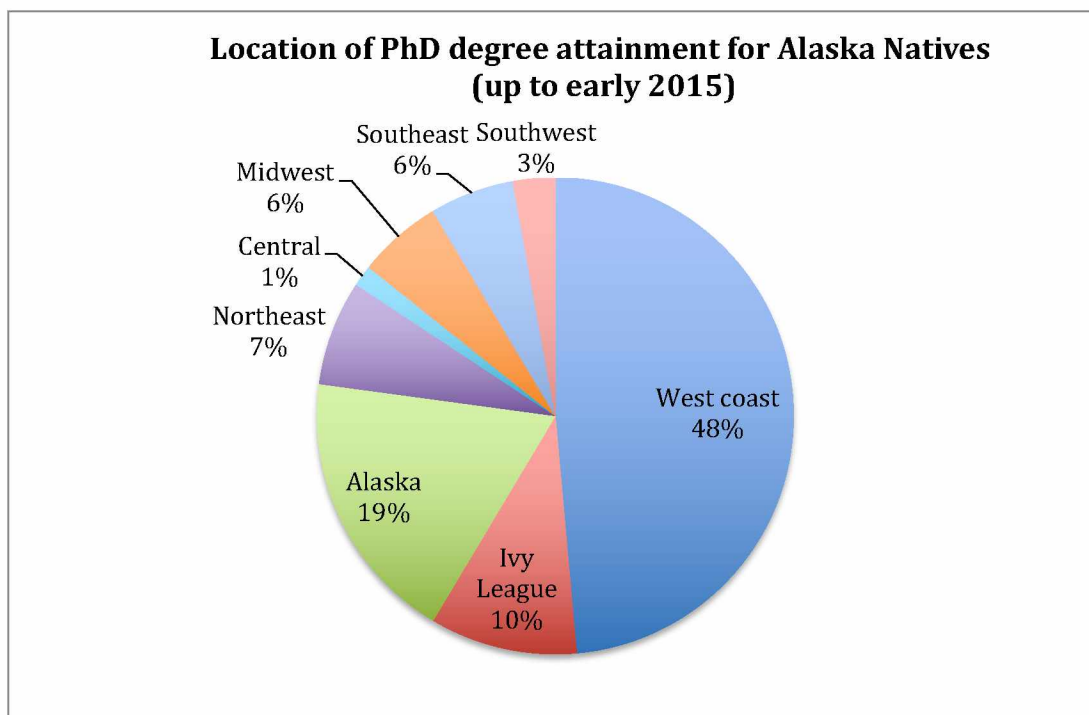




***Figure 4.4: Male and female Alaska Native PhD graduates, 1970-early 2015***

Overall, 63% of the Alaska Native PhD graduates are females and 37% are males. From 1970 to early 2015, there has been a shift in the demographics of male and female PhD graduates. The first cluster of 29% of PhDs was an average attainment rate of 60% male and 40% female. The latest cluster of 29% of the PhDs were 60% female with 40% male, which is the exact opposite of the first clusters of graduates. As of January 2018, the number of female PhDs has increased to 68% female, 32% male of the 90 Alaska Native Earned PhD graduates. Since 2008 to present, the female graduate ratio for PhD degree attainment is approximately 3:1, with 32 female PhD graduates and 11 male PhD graduates.

When examining the locations of PhD attainment for Alaska Native PhD graduates, it varied, but there were particular regions where there were higher numbers. Figure 4.5 shows locations where the participants graduated:



***Figure 4.5: PhD degree attainment numbers for Alaska Native graduates based on university locations***

Figure 4.5 shows the bulk of Alaska Native PhDs graduated in three particular regions: West coast, Alaska, and Ivy League (eight Northeast) institutions. Most recently, there are an additional 20 PhDs from early 2015 to early January 2018, for a total of 90 PhD graduates, which looks similar to this map. The percentages of the three big regions remain fairly similar. See Appendix O, with the Distributions of Alaska Native PhD Degree attainment by Geographic Region Chart up to January 2018, which is the most current graduate location distributions of the 90 current Alaska Native PhDs.

## **4.2 Schooling and Education, Pre-PhD**

Schooling experiences prior to the PhD path varied greatly, from homeschooling in Alaska to attending school in the Middle East. One unusual experience was a participant who attended six different high schools, including two boarding schools, while several others attended

various types of religious schools. Over 75% of Alaska Native PhD graduates attended K-12 public schooling in their home communities.

Eighty-five percent of the participants attended public schools in the community they were raised in during their early years of K-6 schooling experience. Two percent attended a public school away from home. The respondent stated, “mostly public school in home community, but I also went to a private school away from home in [the Middle East] ... My sister and I lived with another family during school in [the Middle East].” Another replied they attended a religious school during the K-6 schooling experience.

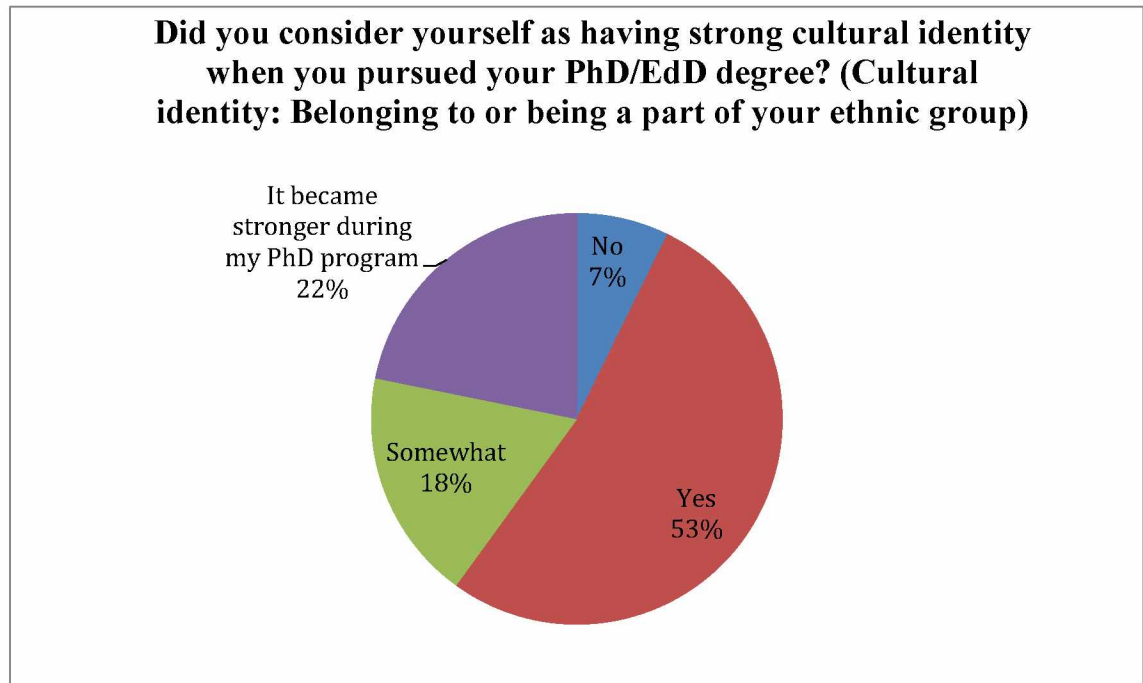
Of the 54 respondents, 70% of the individuals attended public schools in their home communities for grades 7-12. Four percent attended public schools away from home. Six percent said they attended boarding schools away from home. Another 6% said they attended private schools in their home communities. One individual attended a private school away from home. Some examples of students attending ‘away from home’ were: “First year [Northwest Coast city], three years.” Another example was, “Religious school, first at home and then out-of-state for high school,” and, “Public school in my home community 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades and 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades, public boarding school for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.”

One participant commented the secondary education of grades 7-12 should have been broken up into categories of middle school and high school, which is a valid point, as elementary and high schools slightly vary in range. It might have slightly changed the responses. Five participants chose to skip this question.

#### **4.3 Cultural Connections and Identity-Pre-PhD and During PhD Program**

Based on the high percentages in the survey and several interview conversations, cultural connections and identity were a common trait that many Alaska Native PhDs had. Roughly half

of the population considered themselves having a strong Alaska Native cultural identity before entering their PhD programs and 22% experienced an increase of cultural identity during their program. As shown in the survey question, cultural identity refers to “belonging to or being part of an ethnic group.” In this case, it is Alaska Native or Indigenous identity. Figure 4.6 displays cultural identity when pursuing a PhD program:



***Figure 4.6: Participants and their self-perception on having strong cultural identity when pursuing a PhD degree***

Participants had an option of including comments to explain their cultural identity when pursuing their PhD in more detail. Some of their comments are as follows:

My mother was an Alaskan Athabascan (Wood River Tribe of Caribou Indians) in [central Alaska community]. It was not always easy for Natives in Alaska and she taught me from an early age, who I was and where I belonged...I had my aunties and others of my community who also helped with this task. Growing up in a small community, we all knew exactly where we belonged and my cultural identity has always been strong.

Cultural identity was the base of my motivation.

My Iñupiaq identity and serving my communities was what it was all about for me.

My cultural identity and cultural connections were always a part of what I wanted to achieve and what I wanted to do to make things better. My cultural identity has always been a part of my work and the jobs I chose.

These Alaska Native PhD graduates shared ways of how they are grounded in their cultural identity and who influenced them. A few of them mentioned their mothers as being influential with their strong cultural identity.

Aside from the PhDs' past experiences with their cultural background knowledge, several shared how it was important to increase their knowledge base for their future. The following statements are examples of why earning their PhD degree was important in regard to their cultural identity influencing their goals, purpose, or their future profession:

As one of the first in my community to receive a terminal degree, it was my goal to show we can achieve our goals.

My main interest of study was Alaska Natives/American Indians and health care barriers.

Part of my decision to attend my university was the large number of neighboring reservations. I felt this would be a good way to get in touch with my heritage (or at least

the nearby tribes) and potentially work in collaboration and "give back" to Alaska Native/American Indian communities because I had the privilege of earning a PhD.

It helped me to put a meaning and purpose to what I was doing—to help my community.

These participants were grounded with their sense of place, culture, and identity, which gave them a sense of purpose, goal setting ability, and gave them motivation and support on their PhD journey, as well as their future work or purpose beyond PhD degree attainment.

Several Alaska Native PhD graduates commented on how their cultural identity became stronger and how it complemented their learning experience during the doctoral journey. Some of their statements are as follows:

I think this [cultural identity] was the single most important external motivator for me. My work outside of the university was with a Native organization, and I traveled and worked for them throughout my program. When I was working, people from across Indian Country would ask me about my progress at school, what I was studying, and how my research would be helpful to Native people and communities. That curiosity and interest in my work and encouragement to finish helped me get through the really tough times.

It became stronger during my PhD program because that is when I learned about the historical background of my people and why we are where we are at today.

I went to graduate school in the Northeastern U.S. and connected with a Native student group there. We were all struggling with alienation. That group helped me a lot.

I worked for my Native non-profit for approximately five years prior to pursuing my PhD and through those experiences I was connected to the culture and received a lot of financial and "cheering me on" type of support. I also reached out to two external mentors in the Native community whom I consulted with regularly throughout my training who also participated in a significant part of my dissertation process.

Increased Cultural identity during their PhD journey was more significant than expected.

Many Alaska Native PhD graduates shared how they learned about their history, traumas, and other aspects of their cultural identity and supports during their doctoral path. Several of them commented on increased knowledge with group school projects or academic support groups, like American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), which helped them academically and socially. AISES is a nonprofit organization with a mission to increase the number of Alaska Native/American Indians in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. One comment was made regarding a lack of any Alaska Native education in K-12 schooling and how undergraduate and graduate school were an important part of the participant's cultural growth and awareness since she did not have any Native education in public school education. Overall, Alaska Native PhDs benefited from learning more about Indigenous knowledge and hoped to give back to their communities following the completion of degree.

Of the Alaska Native PhD graduates who commented on their cultural identity, several stated they felt it was strong prior to their graduate program. However, almost as many commented on how their cultural identity had increased during their academic degree program.

A few also shared that their cultural identity increased through campus life activities, such as leadership programs and clubs on campus, as stated below with some examples:

I was in the American Indian Leadership Program at [a Northeast University] and exposed to many different tribal cultures besides my own. This made me appreciate my own more.

I joined AISES and [club] (Native American groups on campus) and became more aware and accepting of my tribal values. Up until then I still thought of being Native as a negative thing.

I became actively involved with [a Native American Consortium], eventually becoming its Chairman of the Board.

This participation in Native American campus programs not only gave these Alaska Native PhDs leadership experience, but they reflected on their own cultures and tribal values with an appreciation and better understanding of the importance of their rich history.

Contrarily, some participants made important points on the lack of cultural identity. Their comments are as follows:

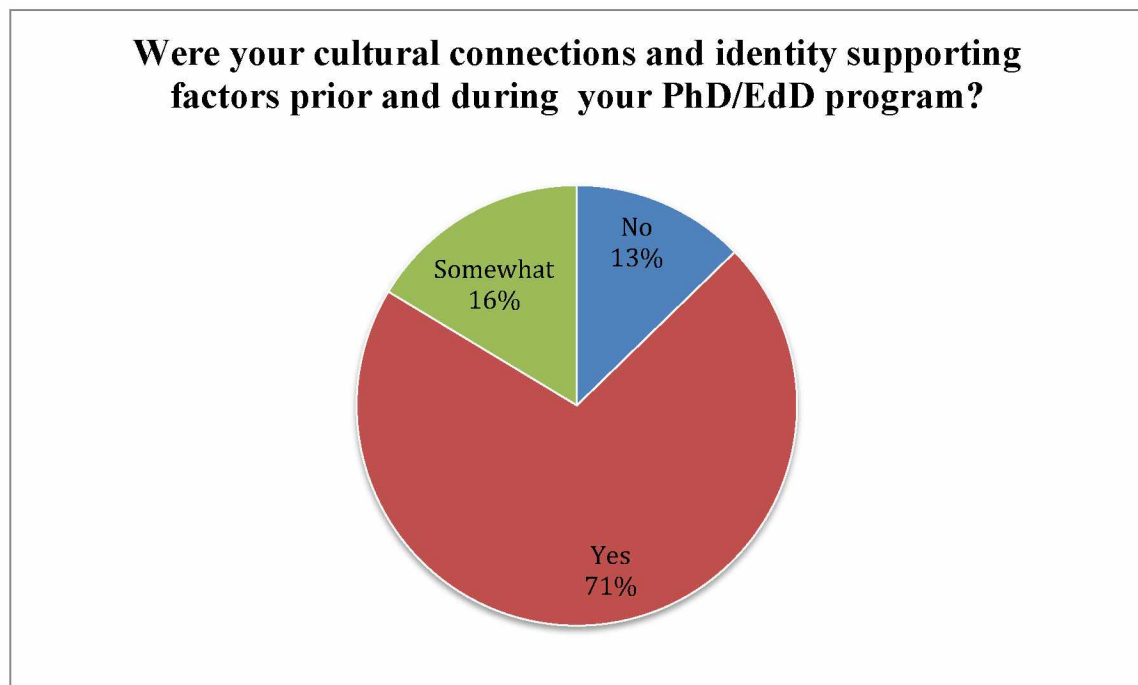
Interesting that you ask this question with reference to just the PhD. I have been very grounded in my cultural identity my entire life. The PhD period for me was probably the least grounded time for me. I had to leave the state of Alaska in order to pursue a PhD and I was at a university with a very low American Indian population.



The shocking lack of living Native cultural life at my university eventually drove me to fight hard to finish my dissertation, which involved honoring our ancestors who had fought similar battles in their own times.

Although some graduate institutions lacked cultural identity, for some Alaska Native PhDs it grounded them more or pushed them to complete their program. These statements confirm the tenacity and resilience the Alaska Native PhDs had.

A question seeking to understand cultural supports before and during their PhD program is displayed in Figure 4.7. This figure shows the role of cultural connection and identity as supporting factors prior and during their graduate program:



***Figure 4.7: Alaska Native PhD graduates and their levels of cultural connections and identity prior to and during their terminal degree program***

Only 13% of the participants said cultural identity and cultural connections played no supporting role in their PhD student experience. Of the 71% stating cultural connections and

identity were support factors, many of the supporting comments were combined in the previous section. One addition to the cultural supports is the significance of home community, pride, and family supports for attaining the PhD degree for Alaska Native graduates.

Several Alaska Native PhDs discussed the importance of achieving their goal for their people back home. Some Alaska Native PhDs mentioned the important role the supports from their people, their home community, and cultural connections of their land had. Some of their statements support this:

I really wanted to show folks back home that they could get a PhD too. I wanted to be able to go back home and tell people that their kids could get PhDs, and how important it is for people in our region to become educated so that we could lift ourselves out of the depression and alcoholism and drug abuse cycle that we seem to be stuck in.

My one sibling was very supportive. She only went as far as a high school diploma but she was my strongest advocate. She would often express how Yup'ik it was to celebrate silently in the privacy of my own space about my accomplishment.

Supportive in the sense that I was given supportive comments like "we are proud of you" from Native friends, relatives and community members, but not supportive in terms of developing any cultural capital or know how in getting through a PhD program and jobs afterwards.

Family and home community members' cultural connections played an important role for some of the participants. They were either motivated from family or community or the scholarly degree attainment motivated them with the interest of being an educated PhD scholar.

One respondent who did not sense a cultural connection shared his thoughts on the topic of cultural relevance during his journey. Although there is a known connection between subsistence fishing and cultural traditions, this participant was not necessarily interested in fishing because of the traditional cultural importance of fishing. He lived in an area near the ocean. He attended postsecondary education with a strong, reputable fisheries program. He had professors who were supportive, but he mainly loved his rigorous degree field for the content rather than the cultural significance of fish. He remarked, “Community and fishing connections (were stronger) than Native identity.” However, this participant’s national and international level of work has had a major impact on protection of Alaska Native subsistence of marine mammals. He has been on national policy committees and still advocates for Alaska Native subsistence rights in his retirement.

Another Alaska Native PhD shared the lack of a culturally rich environment the participant was accustomed to. The participant remarked, “I found myself at a prominent university with almost no Native students. I had such a difficult time getting through. I had never before been in such a cultural and spiritual desert.”

#### **4.4 Motivation: Pre-PhD**

Many factors affected motivation levels of Alaska Native PhD graduates, from their early years of schooling to entering their PhD programs. The highest code frequency in my data was motivation, which was in the top five twice, as was shown on Table 3.1 in Chapter Three.

In this section, motivation level before the PhD journey was disaggregated into several categories: Motivation to pursue a PhD degree, motivational factors contributing to PhD completion, and initial timeframes regarding motivation to attain a PhD. Alaska Native PhDs also shared influential people who motivated them along their journey. On the topic of

motivation, they discuss intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors toward attaining their terminal degree.

Many participants' motivation levels ebbed and flowed throughout their university studies. One survey respondent stated:

During my undergraduate studies I was not motivated in the beginning. Once again I thought it was okay if I just barely got by in my studies. It wasn't until I was not able to get into the teacher education program that I realized I needed to focus on my studies. It was my thinking since I was the first in my family to go to college I was okay, just to pass.

The example of self-determination to break beyond the negative stereotype of being “a drunk Native” is in the following testimony from the participant states:

After my master's program I proved to myself I had the ability to accomplish my goals. Once I determined I was going to continue my studies it was my goal to show my community both in Alaska and my current residence that I could achieve a terminal Educational Doctorate. When I was in boarding school, my 9th grade PE teacher once told me to go back to my reservation and be a drunk Native like so many of my people. Little did that teacher know, I did not have any other shoes besides my combat boots (which were the in thing at the time) that my tennis shoes were too small and I could not afford anything else at the time. I needed to prove to myself that no matter what, I could rise above any stereotype people had against me.

Despite the institutional stereotypes and challenges of poverty, this motivated respondent continued beyond both a bachelor's and master's degree to earn a doctoral degree. Another Alaska Native PhD participant shared a negative motivator. The respondent commented:

I was told I would not earn my PhD by my parents and husband. They did not think I would be able to stick with the program and couldn't see the end in sight. That pissed me off and made me stick with it. (That's the honest answer that most people do not get)

The participant was motivated from the doubt of close family members. These two situations ultimately led to success for both individuals, albeit from negative motivation.

Contrarily, the following are examples of positive motivation to attain a PhD degree from the Alaska Native PhD participants. Degree field or content, scholarship, personal goal, peer, family, and faculty influences were reasons that motivated the participants.

Alaska Native PhDs were motivated to achieve their goals in their academic fields. Some of them commented on why it was important to them.

I was motivated because my area dealt with American Indians/Alaska Natives and cultural factors. My motivation was for self-learning and for wanting to help others from Alaska and other reservations go on to college and have dreams.

It was my dream to get a PhD in physics.

The need to better represent Native and village fishermen strongly influenced me.

There was a group in the study of Native American Spiritual Tradition who met often to discuss theory. We would share readings we found that related to our study and special interests that related to our research questions.

During the two years I was pursuing my first master's at [a Southwest university] in counseling; I spent a lot of time out of the classroom on Indian reservations and found that little direct counseling with Native students was taking place. Counselors were too often doing administrative work and not counseling. For that reason and other problems I observed in reservation schools, I became motivated to pursue a doctorate in anthropology and education in order to be in a position to potentially restructure Native education for the benefit of both educators and students.

As shown with examples, some Alaska Native PhD participants were motivated by not only what they learned in their academic field, but to give back with their learned knowledge and for some, by the field work opportunities and experiences, not just the end goal of what they could do with their degree.

Alaska Native PhDs were also motivated by scholarship. One participant commented on the timing of her scholarship. Although it was not ideal during the last trimester of her pregnancy, it was a financial opportunity that motivated her. She stated:

I had planned to wait until later in life but took a special scholarship opportunity when it came up - when I was seven months pregnant. Having a young family while getting my PhD was tough, but I felt that the opportunity I was given was a "sign" in some way not to wait until later.

The personal goals of these individuals related to their timeline, strong work ethic, resilience, and their identity as an Alaska Native PhD degree holder, contributed to their to success.

Peers and family motivated Alaska Native PhDs during their journey. One participant stated, "I received the most encouragement and support from friends and family while

participating in the [PhD] Program.” Another Alaska Native PhD participant stated, “I have a son who wasn't quite two when I started the PhD. I was MOTIVATED to finish with him in my life.”

Family and peers were powerful motivators for encouragement and achieving goals for one's family.

Alaska Native PhDs expressed how important their faculty and committee members were. A participant stated, “I also had very good committee members, two were not from my university and I think that this provided more perspectives for my research.” Another commented, “I was motivated by [a late Alaska Native professor's] work and influence.” A student commented on the importance of having an international team of faculty and how it influenced her. She stated:

My graduate program had professors from all over the world (Arabia, Africa, India) and I had one Native American professor. I felt like I belonged and was no longer 'the other'. It was an amazing experience that gave me my current life.

Several participants recalled specific names of faculty members who motivated them. It was quite apparent there was often a great deal of respect and admiration for their faculty and committee members. The important role faculty members have on PhD student support is reiterated in Chapters Five and Six.

Participants discussed the stress and rigor of the program. Some shared barriers and challenges, as well as resilience and goals that motivated them. Some discussed their love for academics and enjoyment and passion in their field. Some mentioned their motivation was to create future opportunities.

Alaska Native PhDs discussed their motivation as students prior to their PhD path. Regarding the open-ended question of self-rating academic motivation through the levels of

schooling, two-thirds of the responses indicated they were significantly (quite or extremely) motivated from high school through master's degree. The self-rating of academic motivation responses spiked upward to 94% as the population moved into their PhD level education.

Slightly less than 75% of the Alaska Native PhD graduates were motivated students at the lower elementary grade levels of K-5. Some of the comments displayed the enjoyment of learning, however most of the comments addressed parents and family members having high expectations and supports with reading and homework.

My Mom and Dad expected our best effort. Our Dad (my stepfather) and my Auntie were formal educators so we knew we were supposed to do well, in spite of the fact that there was little if any representation of our lives in school.

My parents and grandparents set very high expectations of me as the oldest child to set a good example for my younger brother; and my father led study sessions during the summer months for my brother, neighborhood kids, and me.

I did all the homework and read everything that I could.

It was not discovered until the 3rd or 4th grade that I was extremely myopic and could not see the board or anything else that was further than about 2 feet. I loved reading and excelled in all studies.

These examples of motivation at lower grade levels displayed a love of learning and parental support and expectations for Alaska Native PhD graduates. For some participants, recalling this information from many decades ago was challenging, so it was apparent that it was



important, as they still recall their motivation sources from early ages. Example statements from participants who were not motivated in grades K-5 include: “Not motivated at all” and “School was not very interesting relative to everything else there was to do.”

During junior high or middle school years, 70% of the participants were extremely or quite motivated. One participant commented, “It was as though I had to constantly prove to others that I had equal or greater capacity than others around me....”

The topic of racism appears in various locations of PhD comments. A few of the students were motivated based on the negative stigma they wanted to overcome. Some participants commented on reasons they were not motivated during the challenging early teen years. Comments displaying a lack of motivation in the middle school years were as follows:

This was a hard time for me as the good teachers were told not to associate with "us Natives" and the others did as little as possible and even stressed we would only become "Drunk Natives." So why bother.

I didn't care. Did what I had to do to pass so I wouldn't be in trouble with parents.

[I] started to discover sports and girls.

Their reasons were examples that were real and important to mention, as the troubling teen years, with experiences of racism and just being a developing teen experiencing extracurricular activities.

The motivation level of the PhD students in high school was very similar to elementary and middle/junior levels. Sixty-eight percent were extremely or quite motivated. Twenty-four participants shared comments with their responses.

Alaska Native PhDs discussed their parental and family support that motivated them in high school. One participant discussed how her mom helped her with editing and her dad helped with math. Another participant stated, “My dad often said that no one remembered second place, so I was motivated to achieve. I was also driven by the need to earn scholarships to cover the cost of college.”

Teachers and counselors motivated high school Alaska Native PhD students. One PhD commented, “I was lost at sea until 11th grade, when a spectacular English teacher and drama coach turned everything around.” A teacher and coach can make all the difference without even realizing it. Another PhD stated, “I had two or three teachers who were worthwhile. The rest of the experience was pointless.” Teachers at all grade levels, influence students in negative and positive ways.

A challenge that was unique to some Alaska Native PhD students was not having choice with curriculum and programs. Another challenge for some participants was living in extremely rural places with no transportation access other than flying and sometimes ferrying to a bigger or more challenging school. Living “off the road system” presented challenges along with limited choices in education. The following comments are statements from some of the Alaska Native PhDs regarding their motivational level in high school, of which some participants address those challenges:

In high school, I was okay with being in the middle of the road. At times I was okay with just passing. It was not until my junior year of high school I realized I needed to put time and effort in to my education. My first two years of high school were at [a Southeast Alaska] High School and I blamed my attitude of just passing was okay because I was not at home and I was homesick.

I left my home and village, to get access to a better school and classes.

I was told education was a way to get out of my hometown, and by high school I really wanted to leave.

At the high school level some Alaska Native PhDs had various reasons that influenced their motivation towards a better or more education. For some PhD graduates, they realized education was their opportunity, and for some better access to a good education was important.

Some students lacked motivation in high school for various reasons. Their statements demonstrating this are as follows:

As an Alaska Native student, I was invisible to my teachers. High school was a disillusioning experience for me; nothing in the curriculum was related to the real world and reality of Alaska Natives, especially the political issues facing them.

Education was not a priority for my family. I dropped out at 10th grade and decided to return because I did not want to live in my village for the rest of my life. I attended six different high schools because of unstable living arrangements and the high school only went to 10th grade in my village at that time.

[I was] almost never encouraged.

I was married at age 16 between 10th and 11th grades and worked part time six nights a week and my schoolwork suffered as a result. I was not motivated.

I was motivated to hang out, not so much for academics. [Haha]

Half of the comments regarding high school experiences displayed negative or extremely challenging situations, which motivated several of them. Like previous grade level responses, Alaska Native PhD participants as high school students dealt with racism and stereotyping, home situations not being the best in a rural community and wanting a more rigorous educational experience at the secondary level. These situations proved to be unique challenges and barriers for Alaska Native PhD graduates.

An example of a different reason for not being motivated at the college level was, as a participant said, “I was less motivated for my BA because I didn't expect to go to graduate school.” This is an example of low expectation placed on the student, and the student believing the stereotype.

Alaska Native PhD graduates' motivation levels for a bachelor's or master's degree aligned directly with their K-12 motivation levels. As similarly shown with K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade level data, 69% of the participants were extremely or quite motivated to pursue an undergraduate or master's degree. These results suggest that high levels of motivation at an early age persist through the Alaska Native students' academic career.

Several respondents had academic hurdles, which they overcame. Resilience, or the ability to overcome obstacles and barriers, resonates in this particular portion of the survey and interview results. Alaska Native PhDs candidly shared some of their challenges and problems, along with strategies to overcome them in the following statements:

My first year I wasn't motivated to study because there was so much else to do (first time living in the Lower '48), and I lost my scholarships; when I returned, I worked part time

while bringing up my grades in school in part-time classes, then continued to work throughout my undergrad. Sometimes work was more fun...but if I didn't do well and went back home, people commented.

I dropped out of my undergraduate studies because my grades were bad and I depended on scholarships. After sitting out for a year I discovered a passion in working with people and went back to finish.

I was somewhat motivated in undergraduate program, but more so for master's degree since I was on probation for low grades in undergraduate.

It took me a long time. I had to complete my AA then take a break. I dinked around taking odd courses here and there and worked in many industries. I went back to finish my BA, then onto my master's degree. I had to really convince myself to complete a PhD.

These stories share testimony of Alaska Native PhD graduates' unique challenges and barriers, as well as overcoming major obstacles with academic grade issues early in their postsecondary career. The goal of achieving the master's degree benchmark inspired many scholars. Some graduates were motivated to finish undergraduate or master's degree programs due to home pressures, work influences, or just pure tenacity to get the college degree.

Alaska Native PhDs were focused and committed to their path. A few of the numerous comments made by Alaska Native PhDs relating to motivation at the undergraduate or master's levels are as follows:

Motivation to pursue an undergrad degree really did not come until I was in my late 20s. And I was in my mid-30s while pursuing my master's. My graduate mentors definitely motivated me to continue with graduate work.

[I] got very serious after 2nd or 3rd year of college. I knew I was going to get a master's degree but took time off to work in the field before going back for my MA. Work definitely helped motivate me to go back for my master's degree.

I was encouraged to try college at the [university] by a family friend who lived in [my rural community] previously and was helping teaching a course there on Natives in Anthropology. I later enrolled and over time loved the learning and the experience. I only took core courses.

Once I learned what I could do with my interests, I was very motivated. I also had extremely good advisors who were encouraging and challenged me to explore my potential and interests. The faculty at [my Alaskan rural college] was the first of many excellent advisors. The foundation for my career was laid there.

Because our income made me ineligible for receipt of the Gates Millennium Scholarship I had earned, I was motivated to try to finish my undergraduate study in three years; I ended up taking four with a double major.

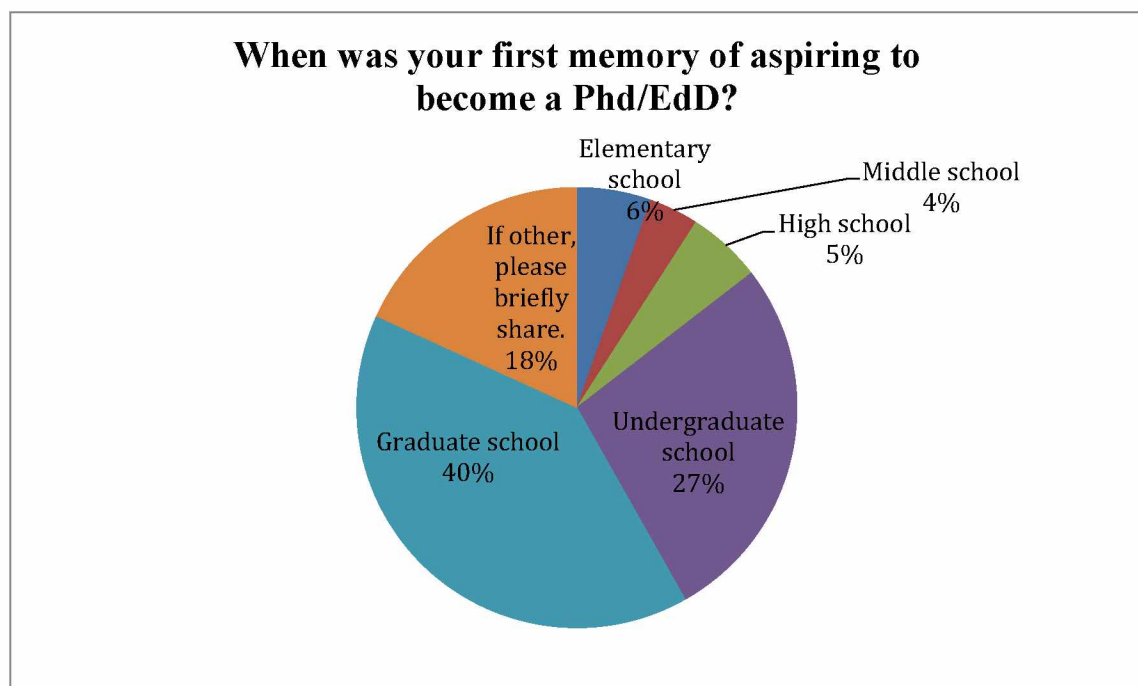
Participants were motivated for a variety of reasons without any consistent motivator at the undergraduate and master's degree levels. Other examples of this motivation included the

love of content or work, competitive spirit, or self-motivation with the academic goal in mind, particularly once they passed the bachelor's or master's degree hurdle. One respondent commented that seeking a higher education was the "only ticket out." Education leads to opportunity and the Alaska Native PhD students were well aware of that. Several PhDs commented on their professors being motivational too.

#### 4.5 First Aspirations of Becoming a PhD

Less than a quarter of Alaska Native PhD graduates had an inkling of pursuing a PhD between elementary and high school. The respondents shared the time at which they first aspired to become a PhD student. Two-thirds of the participants aspired to become a PhD student in college.

Figure 4.8 shows participants' first memory of aspiring to become a PhD graduate.



***Figure 4.8: First memory of aspiring to become a PhD***

The following are examples of the first memory of aspiring to become a PhD graduate:

I had professors tell me I should apply.

I was watching the Cosby Show and noticed the EdD after Bill Cosby's name in the credits; I still think he is one of the most skilled educators I know.

The idea came to me but I didn't see it as an option until I heard about the establishment of the [university] PhD Program.

Three participants commented on their work experiences as a prompt to pursue their PhD degree. One of these individuals remarked, “I pursued my PhD because of my love and dedication to the behavioral health field and helping Alaska Native Peoples become healthy.” Another respondent shared a meaningful response, demonstrating work experience as a key trigger in motivation to earn a PhD:

After I had worked for a year with my MPH degree with the Urban Indian Health Council as the health planner for the maternal and child health needs in Indian clinics in [West coast state]. I found that there was only so much I could do and that others with higher degrees made all the decisions. That was when I decided to go back to school.

#### **4.6 Influential Person(s) for Pursuing a PhD**

When provided the opportunity for multiple responses to the question, “Who influenced you to seek a PhD?” the category of self-influence ranked the highest (72%), closely followed by university faculty (60%). One or more parents were influencers for successful Alaska Native PhD students 50% of the time. Statements from participants describing influential person(s) in their choice to pursue a PhD are as follows:

[University professor/director] made visits to [suburban community].



[I was] motivated for undergraduate but didn't really think about master's degree until some professors encouraged me to consider graduate school.

My dad in particular pushed me to go to graduate school. I realized quickly that there were not many jobs that had influence or paid much unless I went on to graduate school. I am the first in my family to graduate from high school much less earn a master's or PhD.

No one in my family encouraged me as it was not in our experience. And even though I was a good student I was not encouraged in high school. Natives usually did not go on to college in the 1960's it was not part of our life experience then. I was encouraged by a Catholic priest from [Southwest rural community]...He came into the store where I was working after high school...and simply told me that I should go to college and that I should go and check it out...

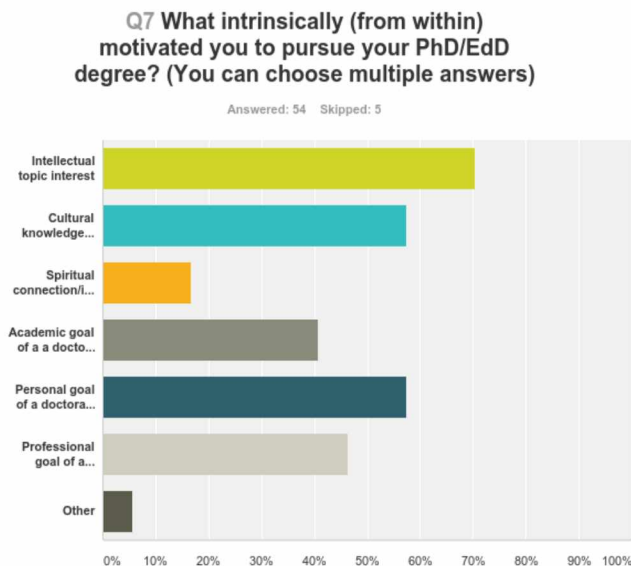
Others and other Alaska Natives concerned about social justice have always encouraged me.

Subject matter was important for respondents who marked "Self." One respondent remarked, "I loved music and my parents were supportive of me going to college."

Comments varied for those who chose to comment. Graduate school professors, a local priest, a father, other Alaska Natives in a community, and personal motivation were examples of people who motivated the Alaska Native PhD graduates.

#### 4.7 Intrinsic Motivational Factors to Attain a PhD

Several themes emerged in the responses as they related to intrinsic motivation for pursuing a PhD degree. The main themes mentioned by the Alaska Native PhD graduates were: love for their academic topic, serving their Native people and community and social justice, as well as personal or professional reasons. One theme that resonated in the responses was that several of the participants described their motivation as a desire to give back to their community and people. There was overlap with serving their Alaska Native community as a professional goal and their cultural or personal interest to advocate for their people. Not only people motivated Alaska Native PhD graduates, but being motivated themselves was extremely important. Intrinsic motivation refers to “reasons from within.” Thoughtful responses were given with this pertinent question as to why Alaska Native scholars wanted to pursue the terminal degree. Figure 4.9 displays specific data relating to Alaska Native PhD graduates’ intrinsic motivation for attaining a PhD.



***Figure 4.9: Alaska Native PhD graduates’ intrinsic motivation for attaining a PhD degree***

The predominant intrinsic reason for pursuing a PhD was “intellectual topic interest” of the degree or topic they were studying. “Personal goal” and “cultural knowledge” were other significant responses with over 50% of respondents selecting those options. Many scholars selected more than one response. Participants gave thoughtful comments regarding their intrinsic motivations. Separate from the data fields provided, a number of scholars commented on the desire to help their community and people.

The following respondent gave an example of being motivated with passion for the degree topic by stating, “This was a “follow your heart” decision. I didn't know anyone who had a PhD, so I didn't understand what it involved. I just loved to learn and loved the topic I chose. I didn't think about what would happen after I got the degree.” Several PhDs commented on their love of their degree field or topic. Over 70% stated intellectual topic interest as a motivation to attain their PhD degree.

PhDs were also motivated to attain their doctoral degree as a personal goal and for various reasons, as shown:

I wanted to prove to my family and community that we could achieve any goal that we put our minds to.

I wanted to be the first in my region to earn a PhD. I didn't realize there were others who earned PhDs in education and one in engineering until after I graduated. Mine was the first in {specific field] sciences. Also, I found my topic fascinating and wanted to see it published. (Most of it still hasn't been, other than my thesis)

These PhDs were determined and goal oriented. Examples of what they wanted to do with their PhD degree were stated. One participant commented, “I like teaching as much as

research, so academia was the ideal place for me, and therefore a PhD was required.” Another stated how having the doctoral degree not only was in her passions, but with her degree she could express her beliefs with issues, as she stated, “I was fortunate to find a graduate program that matched my interest in Indigenous and world music. I thought a Ph.D. credential would help me to get my voice heard on important social issues”

There was clear indication that some Alaska Native PhDs were motivated by cultural knowledge and spiritual connections, as stated:

I saw how much our Native communities value those with a PhD, sometimes even putting that above our people who have great ideas but not the letters behind their name. I wanted to put myself in a position to help others be heard and to help provide that level of 'legitimacy' to our elders, artists and community members who are not recognized by the academy, legal professionals, etc.

I was driven to develop a set of skills and insights I could contribute to my home community and to building a network of Indigenous scholars.

The PhD aligned with my interests and questions around my own culture and heritage language. So I was able to pursue these questions during the process. The faculty position I have now is quite fulfilling in terms of continuing to pursue these interests, and working with students/faculty with aligning interests.

The need to better represent Native and village fishermen strongly influenced me.

[There was a] community need for awareness about cultural education research and stories.

“Giving back” to their communities was an important element that drove many of the participants. Examples of how they did this were: Giving back took the form of art, cultural knowledge, political advocacy, legal support, sharing stories, Native networking, education, and conducting research.

One participant eloquently represented a combination of reasons by stating:

My motivations were personal (the first generation in my family to graduate from high school...and the first to go on to college and graduate school). I also wanted to add my voice as an Alaskan Native (Athabascan) to what others who were not Native were saying. I felt there was a need to have our voice heard and for Native representation. I also found through working different jobs that without a higher degree one could not participate in policy changes. Education was necessary and it was what would help advocate for our own people and our needs. With the knowledge that we needed to be represented in all areas, it was up to us to do this. Opportunities were opening up with the passing of the American Indian Education Act and American Indian Self Determination of Act in the 1970's.

These comments reflect Cajete's (2005) views articulated in the literature review stating the individuals were motivated to make a difference by serving their communities and advocating for their people, their Indigenous sociopolitical issues, and/or maintaining their ancestral traditions and values.

#### 4.8 Extrinsic Motivational Factors to Attain a PhD

Extrinsic motivation plays a critical role in how one chooses a career path or profession. Extrinsic motivation refers to factors external to self. Examples of extrinsic factors in Alaska Native doctorates include the public and external attractions of a career, money, prestige, and power. Table 4.3 shows the Alaska Native PhD graduates' external factors that motivated them to earn their PhD degrees. Participants were able to select more than one response.

**Table 4.3:** Extrinsic motivational factors to attain a PhD for Alaska Native graduates

Extrinsic motivational factors to attain a PhD degree	Percentage
Career advancement in my field or workplace	44.9%
Job opportunities	40.8%
To create other unknown opportunities	36.7%
To become a doctoral researcher, scientist, anthropologist, linguist, etc.	34.7%
To become a college professor	24.5%
None of the extrinsic factors motivated me	14.3%
Financial gains	12.2%

An overwhelming 85% of the population cited career advancement and increased job opportunities as the primary extrinsic motivation for seek a PhD degree. Only 14% cited financial gain as a motivational factor. Specific references from scholars relating to career advancement and job opportunities are as follows:

Money, prestige and power were not my motivations. Job opportunities certainly were a motivation as I had to support myself and help my family if needed. I also wanted to have a job where I could have say and affect policy...not just do what others told me to do. Mostly I loved learning and my main motivation was always that I wanted to do more for Native people and have a position that I could give back and help provide access to higher learning and to opportunities that were open to all.

I worked in a lab...the guy with a PhD was listened to and I was not. It pissed me off, so I got a PhD so I would be heard and listened to as well.

[I would like] to become a museum director or curator.

The existing public school system at the time did not meet the needs of Native American students who, I have found, to be bright and capable. I was motivated to help facilitate a complete overhaul and restructuring of education found in classrooms on Indian reservations.

I wanted to be in the academic fray.

Examples of the extrinsic motivational factors for Alaska Native PhDs, such as career opportunities, led to examples of utilizing their voice in jobs and for causes, as well as leadership roles to speak and help their communities and enhance their degree field interest.

Another area with a high percentage response was the category, “To create other unknown opportunities.” A participant remark echoing this sentiment was, “I just had an interest in the subject, and I had parents who were willing to help me continue my education. I didn't think much about the opportunities at the other end.”

Numerous Alaska Native PhD graduates mentioned passion for the topic and/or specific interest in their degree field. One participant stated, “I loved learning and was a very 'thirsty' student. I pursued knowledge for knowledge's sake.” Another discussed wanting to learn

Quantum Theory and its application, while another said, “I was buried in my research and in fact had left home to give myself all my time for study. I thoroughly enjoyed it.”

#### **4.9 Challenges and Barriers Specific to Alaska Native PhD Graduates**

One of the research questions asks, “What challenges and barriers are specific to the Alaska Native demographics?” I address this research question before their PhD program in this chapter and during their PhD program in Chapter Five. There were not many challenges unique to Alaska Native PhDs before their PhD program. Geography was the unique challenge that resonated for Alaska Native PhD graduates before their PhD program, given 75% were raised and attended schools in Alaska. This unique challenge was apparent before their PhD experience, as the distance to visit and learn about PhD programs in the lower 48, where most Alaska Native PhDs attended their undergraduate and graduate programs, was significant. There were limited options available to the prospective Alaska Native PhD students within Alaska. Since most Alaska Native PhDs were raised in Alaska, they did not have the luxury of easily driving to various colleges and checking out programs before making their decision as to which university to attend. This commonly occurs with other college bound students in the lower 48. Paying for college in the lower 48 is not cheap either. Pre-PhD debt likely occurred for some of the Alaska Native PhD students.

Geography was also a barrier for some Alaska Native PhD students before their PhD program or where they lived before high school. A few Alaska Native PhD graduates said they moved from rural communities to urban communities for a better education.

Unique challenges to Alaska Native students prior to their PhD work also included low expectations from teachers or counselors. One participant said, “My high school counselor said I would not make it at college, so I decided to prove I could.” Another challenge that many Alaska



Native PhD graduates experienced prior to completing their degree was the statistically low numbers of PhD role models. One participant articulated, “As one of the first in my community to receive a terminal degree, it was my goal to show we can achieve our goals.” Stereotypes from teachers and professors are a challenge that still exists. The wisdom on how to address these challenge from Alaska Native to PhDs will encourage and motivated Alaska Native students across grade levels.

#### **4.10 Common Demographics and Factors for Alaska Native PhD graduates**

At the start of my research project, I envisioned creating an aggregate of the typical Alaska Native PhD graduate. Surprisingly, I quickly learned it was not possible, as the graduates do not fit into one common stereotype, as they attended universities throughout the United States with a range of degree fields and careers. Although not applicable to all Alaska Native PhD graduates, some of the percentages were not strong enough to create one aggregate, but evidence did show some strong similarities in many of the participants’ backgrounds.

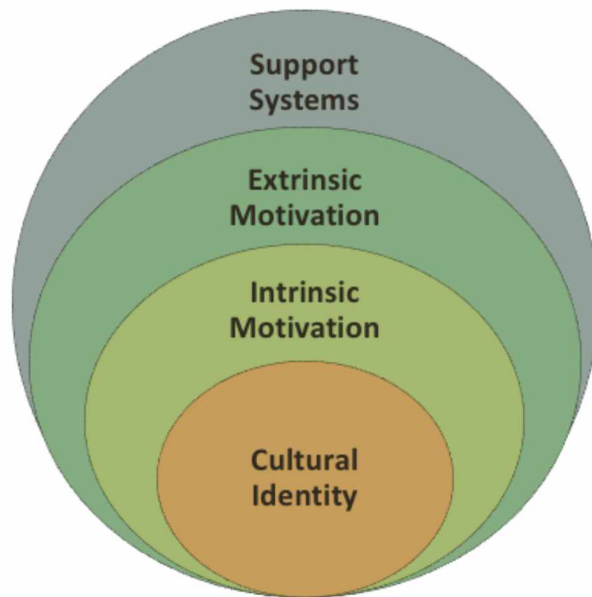
A summary of some of the main common factors relating to background and demographics for the participants is as follows: (a) most grew up in Alaska; (b) significant number are from rural communities or rural-to-urban communities; (c) many attended K-12 grades for school in their community and/or several transferred to a larger community for secondary education; (d) most lacked the ability to speak a Native language, yet have a strong cultural identity; and (e) most had people who motivated them such as professors, advisors, peers, and significant others. Most of the Alaska Native PhD graduates were also self-motivated throughout K-8 grade and when pursuing their PhD degree. Most PhDs were self-driven by intellectual interest of their degree field, although career advancement, job opportunity, and becoming a doctor were important motivators for many of the PhDs too. Nearly three fourths of

the PhDs considered themselves to have strong cultural identity before and during their PhD with it increasing 22% more during their PhD journey. Another common factor was most had experienced challenges during their PhD journey, however, slightly more than half stated they did have significant challenges within the university. Challenges are discussed in further detail in Chapter Five.

More than half of the Alaska Native PhD graduates were married or living with a companion, they were typically under 40 years old, and the majority of them were fulltime or near fulltime students. Three fourths of them stated they had barriers, of which slightly more than half were external to the university.

My research question, “If patterns of successful factors exist, can these factors be replicated to expand Alaska Native participation in PhD or other graduate programs?” resulted in four themes. The four emerging themes or common factors contributing to success for Alaska Native PhDs: (a) cultural identity, (b) intrinsic motivation, (c) extrinsic motivation, and (d) supports. Cultural identity played an important role before and during the PhD process for almost three-fourths of the participants. Figure 4.10 shows a diagram of these important factors that proved to be important to most PhDs during their PhD journey.

## Common Success Factors



***Figure 4.10: Common factors important to Alaska Native PhD attainment***

The smallest circle in the figure represents cultural identity, which was primary to many participants (71%) before or during their PhD journey. While coding and categorizing the survey and interview comments, it became quite apparent that many of the coding responses from survey and interview participants aligned with the common ten Alaska Native Cultural Values for Curriculum (ANKN, 2006) and it was not just from the few questions on cultural identity.

This diagram shows an alignment of common factors that led to successful degree attainment for Alaska Native PhDs. The diagram includes support systems (financial, academic, and social supports), extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and in many cases, cultural identity and supports as the critical elements or patterns of PhDs to ensure successful completion of their doctoral degree.

Table 4.4 gives examples of a participant's comment with each of the Alaska Native cultural values.

**Table 4.4:** Alaska Native PhD comment example related to Alaska Native cultural values and cultural identity

Cultural Values tied to AN PhD Graduates		
Common cultural value	Explanation of cultural Value	Quotation from Alaska Native PhD participant relevant to the cultural value
Show Respect to Others	Each Person Has a Special Gift	At [West Coast university] our professors were on a first name basis. They never used the term, "Dr.". Sometimes I would – obviously, I was very respectful to many of them, but it was first name basis.
Share What You Have	Giving Makes You Richer	I feel like I have accomplished and reached my goal of getting a PhD, and now I want to give back and train others and increase the number of Native BSW or BA students, MA students, PhD students, law students.
Know Who You Are	You Are a Reflection on Your Family	My mother left Alaska after getting married, but always instilled in us a sense of pride for who we are. Even though we do not follow traditional customs. I lived in Alaska for ten years after getting married and found it to be very welcoming and with a sense of feeling "at home", even though "home" is where my parents live.
Accept What Life Brings	You Cannot Control Many Things	My mother left the family when I was six years old, and there was only one other Alaska Native family that I knew in Colorado. AISES & the first Alaska Native female PhD graduate helped strengthen my cultural identity.
Have Patience	Some Things Cannot Be Rushed	I would also get to know their professors and advisors well and go to their office hours! Make friends with others in your classes...and in time you will find that you belong and have a great support network of people who care about you and who want you to succeed. It will take your time but it is worth it to find a place of belonging on campus.
Live Carefully	What You Do Will Come Back to you	My love and dedication to the behavioral health field and helping Alaska Native Peoples become healthy.
Take Care of Others	You Cannot Live without Them	I chose a fisheries degree, which was very relevant to my self-identity as a member of my community.

Table 4.4 continued

Honor Your Elders	They Show You the Way in Life	It has given me the freedom to explore and work with Native elders to talk about issues important to them. I think Native faculty researchers are in a unique position because we advocate on behalf of our tribal communities, but we have the skills of Western education to get their stories heard in a format that might be unique to Western education, such as storytelling, qualitative methods, and talking circle format.
Pray for Guidance	Many Things Are Not Known	Advice from PhD: Make time—and this will be very hard—to participate in your cultural life. Western education focuses entirely on the neck up whereas our cultures encourage development of the entire instrument (the whole body, mind, and spirit).
See Connections	All Things Are Related	There was a group in the study of Native American Spiritual Tradition who met often to discuss theory and would share readings we found that related to our study and special interests that were related to our research questions.

Many tribes and people across the globe value their cultural identity and with the understanding of “who we are, where we come from, and where we are going”, which is a common term in many cultures across the globe. Although the topic of cultural identity was only located in few questions throughout the survey, it was woven throughout their responses.

With an extensive query search, the cultural value, “Pray for Guidance” had very few comments generated, but some participants that commented on spirituality valued it greatly. The small number correlates with the small number of comments regarding religious spirituality throughout the survey. One anthropologist participant mentioned in the realm of Alaska Native longstanding history, many religions were introduced to Alaska Natives around the time of colonization, with the influx of missionaries across the state’s regions. It is important to note that the cultural values publications were created in the mid 1990s to early 2000s from Alaska Natives, elders, non-Native educators, and community members all over Alaska. Many of the

Alaska Native PhD responses nicely fit into examples of the ten common Alaska Native cultural values, which were formally created and published in the 1990's.

#### **4.11 Motivation as a Common Factor**

Motivation was vital to Alaska Native PhD graduates before and during their PhD journey. Significant numbers above 50% demonstrate the importance of motivation-both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, there are compelling comments and stories demonstrating the importance of motivational factors to pursue and complete a PhD degree for the Alaska Native PhD graduates. The following are some statistics that demonstrated high percentages of 50% or more for the PhD participants regarding motivation before or during their PhD journey.

##### **Motivation Pre-PhD:**

- 95% Extremely or quite motivated to pursue a PhD degree
- 71% were quite or extremely motivated in elementary school
- 70% were quite or extremely motivated in middle school
- 68% were quite or extremely motivated from high school

The majority of Alaska Native PhD students were motivated in school from elementary school to their graduate degree. Several expressed a love for learning and having support at home from family or teachers.

##### **Motivational level to pursue a PhD program:**

- 72% were self-motivated to pursue a PhD
- 60% were motivated by university faculty to pursue a PhD
- 50% were motivated by parents to pursue a PhD

The majority of Alaska Native PhD students were self-motivated to pursue a PhD degree. Of all academic levels, university faculty played the most important role in motivating Alaska Native students to pursue a doctoral degree. Parents often motivated PhD students to pursue the degree as well.

- 70% listed “intellectual interest” as predominant driver for a PhD degree
- 63% were always motivated in their program

This coincided with motivational level due to intellectual interest in a PhD program. Results find a majority of the Alaska Native PhD graduates were intellectually stimulated to pursue their PhD and remained motivated throughout their program.

Regarding motivational reasons to pursue a PhD, five major themes have emerged from the data for Alaska Native PhDs. The five motivational themes for Alaska Native PhDs are: (a) intellectual interest (b) cultural interest, (c) academic interest, (d) personal interest, and (e) professional interest. The motivation that drove participants toward a PhD degree align with examples of benefits the PhDs experienced. One PhD participant shared how the PhD degree benefited him both personally and professionally:

I am going to break it down into two different perspectives. There is the professional, “I am a doctor. I do research. I work for the university.” Then there is the, “I am from a tribal community and I am doing research on behalf of tribal communities, and I am working on gaining the respect and trust of tribal communities.

The five themes of motivational reasons to pursue a PhD degree and the benefits of having the PhD degree are shown in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5:** Comparison of motivational reasons to pursue a PhD and how the PhD degree has benefited Alaska Native PhD graduates

Comparison of motivational reasons to pursue a PhD and how the PhD degree has benefited Alaska Native PhD graduates		
Type of motivation that drove the Alaska Native PhD graduate	Alaska Native PhDs' motivational reasons to pursue a PhD degree responses (Pre PhD)	Example of benefits or opportunities for Alaska Native PhD graduates following PhD attainment (Post PhD)
Intellectual interest in degree or topic	"This was a "follow your heart" decision. I didn't know anyone who had a PhD, so I didn't understand what it involved. I just loved to learn and loved the topic I chose."	"I did a challenging calculation for my thesis and taught courses in classical physics, numerical analysis and quantum mechanics. These have given me a positive confidence in my work as a physicist/engineer."
Cultural knowledge or connection to pursue a PhD degree	"The PhD aligned with my interests and questions around my own culture and heritage language."	"With my degrees and Ph.D. I have had great jobs. I have worked in a variety of places (Indian Health Service, Indian health projects, Tribal projects and at the university) and I have enjoyed the all. I have had my dream. My work with Natives and American Indians was interesting and fun and I made many friends. I am now retired and I can say it was a full life doing interesting work. I tried to give back."
Academic goal of PhD degree	" I want to support the formal educational system in its representation of authentic history and Alaska Native knowledge. Children deserve to be built up from the foundation of their identities and community priorities to be successful in local, state, and global arenas."	"It afforded me a global network of leaders; allowed me to get my foot in the door with national research organizations like NIH and NSF (to serve as a PI for instance); and taught me the value of inquiry and messaging."



Table 4.5 continued

Personal goal of a PhD degree	“I wanted to prove to my family and community that we could achieve any goal that we put our minds to.”	“This degree has provided me with personal and professional growth that allows me to serve others in a culturally responsive capacity, bridging my education together with my native ways of knowing.”
Professional goal of PhD degree	“I wanted to be a professor.”	“My faculty position is wonderful - it is hugely rewarding to work with students and faculty in higher education. The research I did during the PhD continues to inform my work today.”

The examples show how Alaska Native PhDs’ terminal degrees benefited them on a personal, and then professional level. Alaska Native PhDs’ exhaustive efforts towards their terminal degree reaped benefits for them and their pursuit.

Intrinsic motivation as discussed in this chapter often fits into the categories of intellectual, personal, academic and cultural reasons. Extrinsic motivation was often shown with professional or academic reasons. However, many of these reasons can fit into either intrinsic or extrinsic motivational factors for these participants.

## **Chapter Five: Experiences and Motivations of Research Participants During and After PhD Program**

I did not believe that initially when people would say, “You know, the door is going to open. The path is going to open for you so you basically can do whatever you want to do.” And the Yup’ik me said, “I doubt it because I am Yup’ik.” But there are so many opportunities. In fact there was a conversation at a conference several years ago where I heard a presenter say, “As you complete your PhD, deaf ears will miraculously begin to hear.” I did not quite know how to take that because I was not sure what he meant, but almost the day after I received my PhD, people started listening to me. It was the same words by the same person coming out, but people heard what I had to say. And somehow having a PhD legitimized what came out of my mouth, when really there is nothing that changed about who I am, where I came from, or where I wanted to go.

Walkie Kumaggaq Charles, PhD  
Personal interview, October 2014

The statement above sheds light on how attaining a PhD degree created a voice and opportunities for an Alaska Native PhD graduate following his commitment to attain his PhD degree. He shared his perspective on the importance of his degree attainment and how it benefited him with unforeseen opportunities, particularly with people finally listening to his voice of knowledge, thoughts, experiences, and opinions. As a fluent Yup’ik speaker, he has an important role to continue his advocacy for his Indigenous language and culture while he continues building the pathway for other aspiring Alaska Native students. Today he offers a support system, as he had supports during his PhD journey. He is “giving back” to Alaska Native people with promotion of his language and cultural knowledge.

This chapter presents many shared supports that contributed to Alaska Native scholars’ successful doctoral degree attainment. The previous chapter presented common demographics and background information of what Alaska Native PhDs typically had in common, along with

challenges before getting into their doctoral program. This chapter follows up presenting challenges they encountered during their doctoral journey, of which some barriers were unique to Alaska Native PhD graduates. However, most challenges were not unique to Alaska Native PhD graduates. This chapter will present results of interview and survey data in relation to experiences and what contributed to motivation for Alaska Native PhDs during their doctoral journey. The research question addressing this is, “What challenges and barriers are unique to Alaska Native demographics” during their PhD journey.

The following sections of this chapter present Alaska Native PhD graduates’ supports, mentorships, resilience, challenges and barriers during their PhD journey, and pivotal turning points during their PhD program. This chapter also includes Alaska Native PhDs sharing benefits and opportunities they had upon completion of their doctoral degree program and Alaska Native PhD graduates describing their journey and completion in a few words.

### **5.1 Support Systems for Alaska Native PhDs**

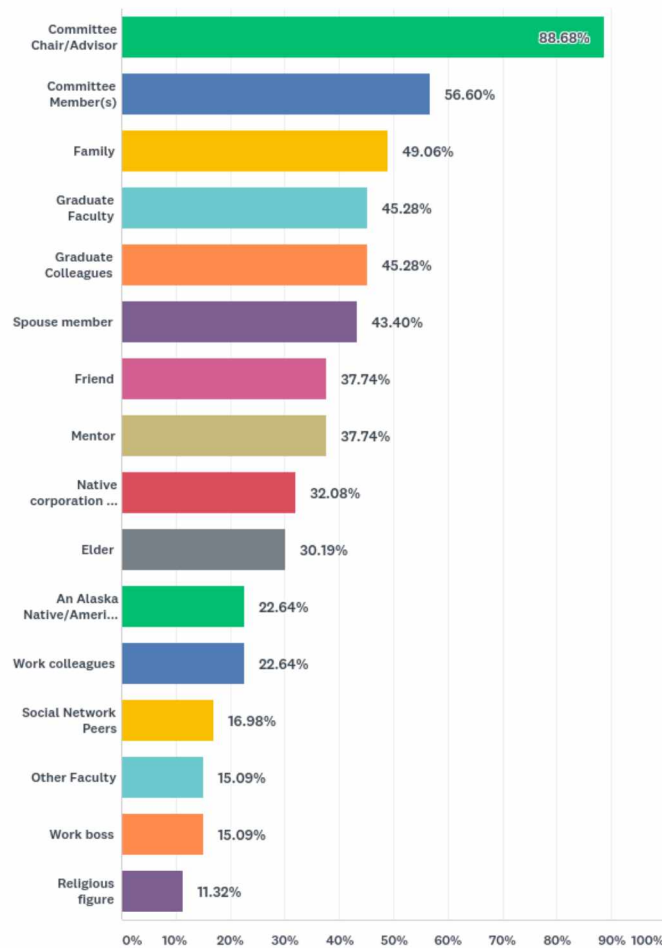
Support systems were a common, significant factor contributing to PhD completion for most Alaska Native PhD graduates. A wide range of support systems played important roles in Alaska Native scholars’ PhD attainment. The range of supports discussed in this chapter are: academic network, professor support, advisor support, family support, Alaska Native/American Indian specific academic support, social support, peer support, media and technology-based social support, financial support, study environment, learning strategies, and mentor supports.

When considering the most important support networks<sup>2</sup> for individuals in the Alaska Native student's PhD journey, Figure 5.1 shows the various support groups during the participants' PhD programs.

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<sup>2</sup> The terms “networks” and “systems” are used interchangeably and mean the same thing in this research project. They refer to a group or part of a whole for support to the PhD participants.

Q21 What support networks did you have that helped you attain your degree?(You can choose multiple answers)



***Figure 5.1: Types of support networks for Alaska Native PhDs during their doctoral program***

One Alaska Native PhD survey participant shared how professors helped with studies stating, “One of my professors hired a professional writer to mentor me and keep me on track to finish.” Another PhD graduate cited several supports, saying, “My graduate professors, my school friends, and the American Indian Graduate Program all were a support network that helped me attain my degree.”

Some of the interview participants included specific examples of how their professors or advisors supported them. One commented, “You know, [Alaska Native professor mentor] has

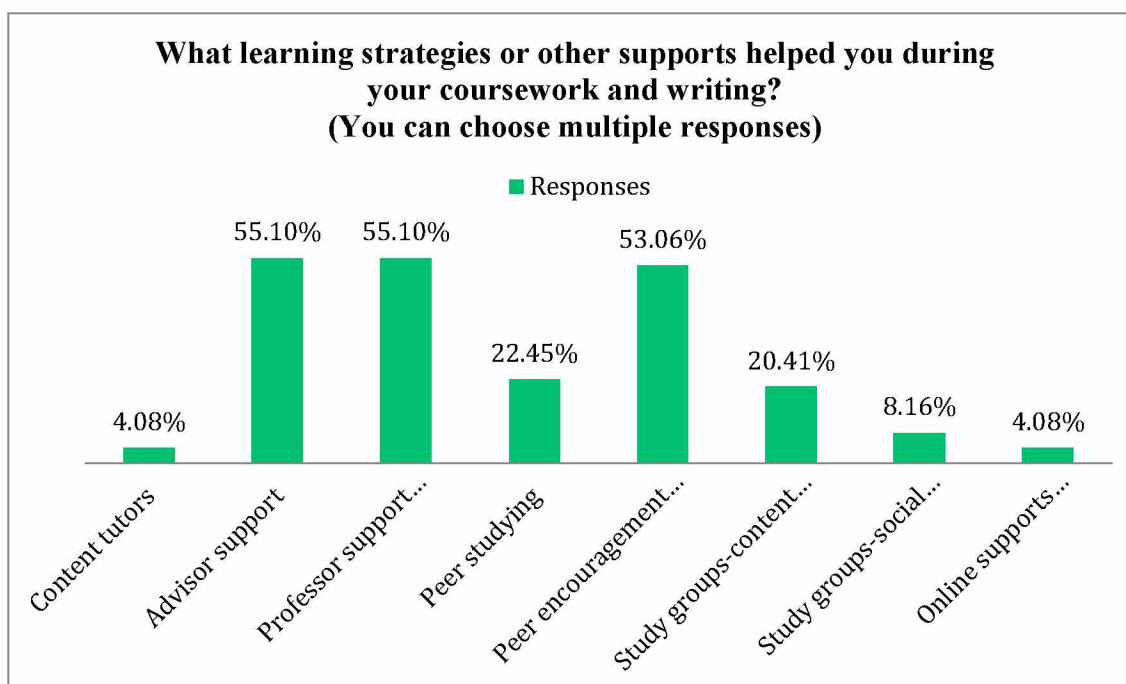
always looked out for me, even now. And my professors at my [West Coast] university who I worked with on my dissertation always were willing to do whatever they could to help me.” One survey participant shared numerous types of supports, stating:

I had many supports. My Native corporation, fisheries, tribal non-profit and minority fellowship paid for my education- taking the financial burden away. My cohort was incredible and they all supported me when I struggled- all of whom I remain close to today. My chair was sensitive to my culture and my way of thinking. He was sensitive to my personal growth and academic struggles. My elder mentors kept me grounded and helped me bridge my Western education together with my Native ways of knowing. My husband and children were patient with me and most of all my faith in the Creator carried me through.

Conversely, two PhD graduates did not feel the need for support networks, as they were self-motivated and were successful and motivated without supportive networks. One PhD graduate stated, “I did not need a support network to achieve my goals. I am not sure if you realize it, but these questions make it sound as if Alaska Natives are helpless, incompetent and need something like Alcoholics Anonymous style support to accomplish goals.” One other PhD scholar commented that his degree was, “attained very much by self.” Countering the statements of not needing support, one survey participant in the same section stated, “You cannot succeed alone.” It is important to take all of the statements into account, as the Alaska Native PhD participants’ responses depict a range of experiences during the graduate school journey.

#### **5.1.1 Academic networks**

The graduates also shared their learning strategies and other supports that helped them attain their doctoral degree. Figure 5.2 below illustrates a number of these strategies.



***Figure 5.2: Alaska Native PhD graduates' learning strategies or other supports during PhD coursework and dissertation writing***

The advisor and professor support in the survey question for the above figure included the advisor and the professor checking periodically with the graduate students, as 55% respondents felt this was important. Another response with over 50% was peer encouragement, which included communication, although the wording did not fit on the bar graph. All three of these supports from advisors, professors, and peers found communication valuable. As mentioned in comments to this survey, some respondents found study groups valuable for content specific courses. Peer encouragement was a better motivator than any other type of peer support systems during their PhD journey. This is likely due to the fact that coursework and writing during the PhD program is not a collaborative endeavor.

Very few stated online supports or content tutors as important, which is not surprising at the PhD level of coursework and writing phase. Some of the PhD graduates were self-reliant and resourceful in their use of digital access, for both academic research and communication with

their professor or advisor. Potentially skewing the importance of digital research and communications is the high number of PhD graduates whose graduate experience predated the broad use of computers.

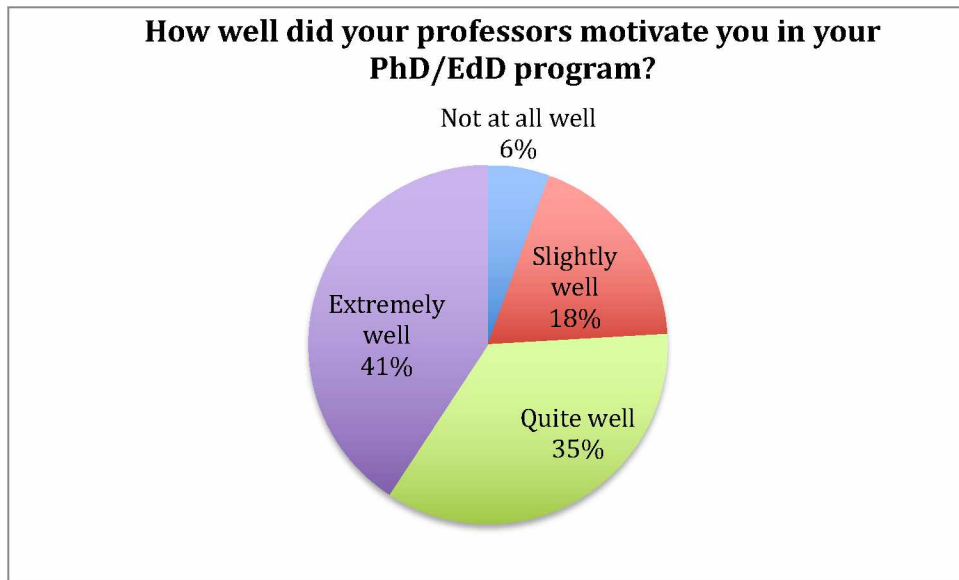
Regarding the frequency of academic support, more than half of the completers (52%) were satisfied with the academic support they received, while 33% stated their level of academic support fell short of their needs. Writing is a content area PhDs mentioned more than once. One PhD graduate had the following to say, "...I wish I had more academic networks but had more than expected. The lack of support made me better able to help those coming along after my shaky, egocentric, quaking little self." This participant understood the importance of giving support to future PhD graduate students.

Fifteen percent of Alaska Native PhD graduates stated they had more support than they expected. One participant reiterated this by saying, "Academic support was very good." In summary, two thirds had adequate or more support than they expected, while one third wish they had more support throughout their PhD programs. There were a few who did not need it.

### **5.1.2 Professor support**

A significant 76% of the Alaska Native PhD graduates reported high or moderately high levels of motivational support from their professors during their doctoral programs. Twenty-four percent of all Alaska Native PhD graduates reported receiving little or no motivational support from their university professors during their PhD program. Figure 5.3 shows the level of motivation from the participants' professors.





***Figure 5.3: Level of motivation provided by professors to Alaska Native PhD graduates***

The data, followed up by PhDs' comments sheds light on positive relationships, praise, and support from professors who motivated them, thus inspired them. The high percentage of support from professors was an important factor contributing to success for several of the Alaska Native PhDs. One participant stated, "They [professors] helped me complete it [PhD degree] under three years, something I don't think I could have done without the structure. In the realm of positive support one PhD stated, "...Amazing mentors and I felt very well taken care of intellectually, and spiritually and as a person." One participant connected her help and success to her story and a mutually beneficial arrangement by stating, "They liked the 'first person in her region to get a PhD' story and encouraged me...my PhD advisor was a young professor who needed students to succeed to get tenure and full professor as well." Another positive response from a PhD echoed the positive support by commenting, "I had a very supportive dissertation committee and Native community members who provided sources of motivations as I was doing my fieldwork and defending.

A few of the participants' comments specifically mentioned Alaska Native or minority professors as great supports. One such comment was, "I was helped by fabulous professors, some Native, some not." Another PhD stated, "While some were less invested or seemed more remote, others, especially a Hispanic professor, were very encouraging." These examples are in support of work by Brayboy et al. (2012), who discussed the importance of having 'faculty of color' and this is something echoed in the findings from several Alaska Native PhD graduates. In Alaska, it means seeking more diversity within the faculty, specifically Alaska Native faculty.

One PhD mentioned the support as secondary, because the motivation was intrinsic and "coming from within." The participant stated, "They [professors] were supportive, but it was all coming from within.... I had a dream before all this schooling became a reality and the elders told me to go for Higher Education... my doctorate. It was a deeply spiritual thing."

Aside from professors as motivators, some PhDs did not rely on the support. An Alaska Native PhD who did not require motivation from professors said, "I did not need motivation from professors. I was not a baby, but a grown man. I chose to enter the program, and it was my goal to complete it on time and with distinction." Another said, "There was a real sense that my success in the program was based on my own motivation; professors were there when called upon."

Although the percentages are high for professors showing support, there were also participants who experienced a lack of support or undesirable interactions from professors, which also motivated the PhDs in a negative sense, as shown:

I was told I would never graduate at [Western region] university. Rumors were about at a West Coast university that I dropped out. I was actually lied to at that school about what I

would need to do. A professor at an East Coast university promised to write a letter of support, then held on to it until after the deadline.

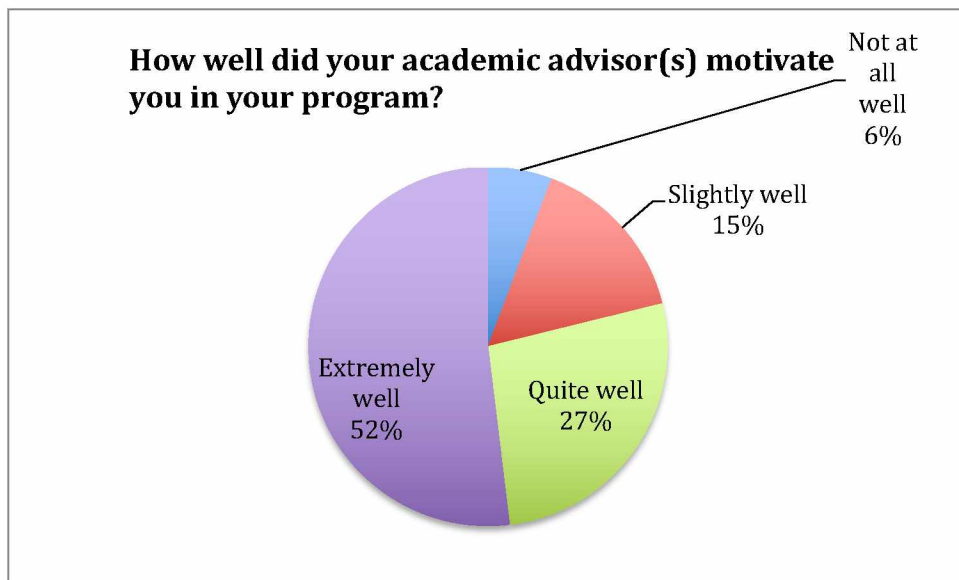
Albeit sometimes they motivated me through their negative energy (e.g., I became motivated to prove them wrong, that I was not an anti-modern or insufficient Native woman).

As with most PhD students I had some frustrating conflicts with my first PhD Advisor. My third year, I switched to someone else who was much more motivating for me.

There were several responses exemplifying the determination and resilience of these Alaska Native scholars, particularly those who lacked strong support from their professors in their doctoral program. In contrast, several graduates provided the names of their professors, peers, colleagues, and advisors who greatly helped them on their journey. There were many comments PhDs wrote, including names of Alaska Native/American Indian professors who were very important with supporting the participants. Due to IRB and confidentiality issues, those professors' names cannot be shared.

### **5.1.3 Advisor support**

Seventy-nine percent of respondents said their academic advisors motivated them extremely well or quite well, as shown in Figure 5.4. This percentage is consistent with professor support for the respondents, as does the little support percentages.



***Figure 5.4: Level of motivation provided by advisors to Alaska Native PhD graduates***

Given the significant percentages of academic advising support at the PhD level, it is an important factor contributing to successful completion of programs for Alaska Native scholars.

Most of the comments on advising described positive experiences shared by the Alaska Native PhD graduates. Some examples of their supportive academic advising experiences are as follows: “My advisor was my primary contact on a weekly basis. He was not always easy, but he was always there. He got very familiar with my tears!” Another stated the significance of their advisor, “My advisor was critical. If he had not been my ‘Rock of Gibraltar’ I likely would have said ‘to hell with this’ and left sooner.”

One PhD mentioned the positive and negative motivations their advisors provided, “My academic advisors helped. One stuck with me through the whole dissertation process. The other motivated me by telling me I could not meet the deadlines and I showed her.” Many of the comments shared by the PhD graduates displayed respect and gratitude to their advisors who were a driving force in their success. Some Alaska Native PhD students stated they did not need the advising support, but knew it was there if needed.

A few survey participants mentioned negative advising experiences, which are as follows:

They had a hands-off approach. It was a mixed blessing if you were not motivated. You fail if you pick the wrong topic. You end up struggling and failing. Luckily, I chose a topic that helped me succeed.

It was a mixed experience. A Native person (an administrator, not faculty) recruited me to the program, but he left after my second year. The experience became much more difficult at that time.

They did not have much interest in my subjects, and because I was poorly prepared, I do not think any of my professors believed I would be successful. So, I did not receive much support.

Although these students had negative advising experiences, they weathered through the experience and eventually either received support or found the self-motivation to finish their PhD degrees.

#### **5.1.4 Family support**

Participants had an option to select multiple responses regarding their ‘social support’ network. Alaska Native PhDs had an option to provide comments to this question if they wanted to do so. Forty nine percent selected ‘family support’ as a choice. One participant expanded upon it further by commenting his family did not understand or appreciate his doctoral program. This is illustrated with his statement, “Since I was the first PhD in my family, family did not really understand fully what I was going through, although they tried to support me.” Other comments

were made that families supported their doctoral student relative, even without understanding the content or intensity of their doctoral program.

Some candidates stated they knew they had their family support, even if family members were far away. An interview participant stated, “I have a sister, her name is [anonymous], who towards the end of my writing my dissertation would call and say, ‘There’s no turning back. There is no turning back. It’s crazy for you to turn back because you’re almost done.’”

Spouses played a significant role in supporting some of the PhD graduates with 43% of the respondents selecting ‘spouse member’ as a social support network to attain their PhD degree. One survey participant commented, “My wife and I completed our EdD together. I lived with my greatest supporter.” Another survey participant echoed the significance of spousal support by stating, “Near the end of my graduate training, my current spouse was instrumental in helping me complete my degree. He helped me get organized and cope with my anxiety about whether I could successfully complete my degree.” Another participant commented on how nice it was to be married during a portion of his PhD journey, even though they divorced while still in school.

#### **5.1.5 Alaska Native/American Indian specific academic support**

Eighty-three percent of the Alaska Native PhD survey participants indicated they had either no or only an occasional connection with Alaska Native-based academic support networks. Quite a few Alaska Native PhD graduates commented that a program did not exist at the time. Some said it would have been helpful.

One graduate commented, “There was not one [Alaska Native/American Indian graduate student] at my university. I was the only American Indian graduate student at my university

(maybe there was one other).” Another PhD scholar stated, “My cohort consisted of two Native Americans, one Chinese, and one White.”

Another Alaska Native PhD graduate said, “I had to develop support outside of my university. The Dorothy Danforth Compton Fellowships and Ford Foundation Minority Fellowships were very useful in this regard.” This person sought to find a cohort group for academic support. One respondent commented there were no other Alaska Natives in his field, which mirrors other responses.

Another Alaska Native PhD survey participant mentioned strong academic support from Alaska Native/American Indian alumni as well as the [Northwest) university group. The supports for this Alaska Native PhD graduate included having a solid international Indigenous network. Another respondent stated, “I participated in [cultural studies related] PhD program gatherings and took advantage of travel opportunities. I was able to attend a Wellness Conference in New Zealand.”

The most consistent response to questions about cultural-based academic support were that the aspiring Alaska Native students were often the only Alaska Natives in their program, or one of very few Alaska Native/American Indians. Many graduates stated these support systems did not exist at their institutions. Barnhardt and Kawagley’s efforts in Native education aimed to increase cultural-based academic support in western institutions.

One of their initiatives was to create a doctoral degree, with intentions of increasing the number of Alaska Native PhD graduates. Their vision of preparing the first generation of Indigenous scholars was moving forward after Alaska Federation of Natives formal adoption of a resolution of advanced studies, as stated by Barnhardt:

The Alaska Federation of Natives urged the development of advanced graduate studies addressing indigenous concerns with a formal resolution adopted in 2004. Over the next two years we assembled a list of over 100 Alaska Native people with master's degrees who expressed an interest in pursuing a PhD. (2008, p. 6)

With the efforts of Barnhardt and Kawagley, efforts to increase culture-based academic support were successfully implemented at UAF. With their vision, the Indigenous Studies PhD program website shows at least 21 Alaska Native students, candidates, or graduated Indigenous Studies PhDs (UAF, 2017). Hence, an increased number of Alaska Native PhD graduates may increase academic supports for Alaska Native graduate students.

#### **5.1.6 Alaska Native/American Indian social supports**

Thirty two percent cited Native corporations as being an important support network. However, some respondents commented there were not corporation programs available to help them. Thirty percent of the PhDs stated they had Alaska Native/American Indian social supports very often or fairly often.

Several students who had Alaska Native/American Indian social groups (23%) chose to comment on the Indigenous groups they were involved with at their college. Alaska Native PhDs gave examples, which are listed as follows:

- Harvard's American Indian Education program
- American Indian Leadership Program at Penn State
- American Indian Graduate Program at University of British Columbia
- Native American Cultural Center at Stanford
- Indigenous Studies gatherings and networking at University of Alaska Fairbanks
- Wunk Sheek at University of Wisconsin



- Inuit Circumpolar Council
- American Indian Studies Center at a university
- American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)
- Graduate Diversity Council
- Native American gatherings
- Alaska Native pioneer PhD mentor female near Stanford

Although the majority of Alaska Native PhD graduates did not have Alaska Native/American Indian social groups, some did talk about receiving cultural support from family members.

An Alaska Native PhD graduate commented on the effectiveness and importance of their American Indian Graduate Program by stating:

I have always been involved with the American Indian Graduate Program at [a Northwestern university], both as a student and as a graduate student and then later as a member and chair of their Advisory Board. I had a network of Native students from all areas both urban and rural. It is a great program that offers much to the Native students and to the surrounding Native communities. In addition, it was fun and pressure free.

The American Indian Graduate program at her college was a success and sustainable. One graduate shared the ongoing friendship she had developed with her Alaska Native/American support network, “I had one colleague who was very supportive, and I continue to collaborate with her today.” Another Alaska Native scholar commented, “I urge all Native students at whatever level to get involved with a social support network.”

On the contrary, Other PhDs expressed a sense of isolation and desiring more social supports. Some respondents commented on the lack of support and would have liked more support, as shown in their comments:

I wish that I had more social support from Native Americans. I was not aware of many programs until I became a faculty member.

More social support would have been very helpful. I was able to attend professional conferences during my program, which helped with the development of my ‘scholar identity’.

I wish I had more social networks but had more than expected and had the right amount. I was beyond embarrassed at being an anthropologist coming home to Western Alaska interviewing my relatives and fellow Native people. They would have none of it, so I just had to carry on. I felt like an isolated nightmare but was surprised to learn I was more of a dream come true to my dad's schoolmates in Western Alaska.

One Alaska Native PhD scholar said, “Yes, I created one (a social support network) via my ‘[anonymous] Project’, which became my article ...” Her document is foundational towards increasing Alaska Native PhDs, as it is easily accessible via an Alaska Native network site.

For a significant number of survey respondents, culture-based social networking was not available during their graduate work. It may be emphasized more in modern times now, with the availability of technology and social media combined with distance education graduate programs where peers interact remotely.

Although there were Alaska Native/American Indian networks for the Indigenous scholars, Seventy percent of the PhD graduate population participated in either ‘no or occasional’ Alaska Native/American Indian social support networks.

Half of the students (50%) indicated they were satisfied with the level of support they received from all of their social networks, 15% responded that the level of support exceeded expectations, and for 35% of the students, the level of support was insufficient. These statistics did not come as a surprise, as they were not profound one way or another.

The following themed statements originate from Alaska Native PhD survey participants who did not feel they needed social supports or those supports were a minimal factor in degree success:

I had the choice of having support when I needed it and then being left alone if I was doing fine. I could choose what I needed and what was the right amount for me. I did not need anyone to tell me to continue. Most people drop out of doctoral programs because they are not tough enough to hack them. A PhD is a weeding out process, and people need to know that if they are not good enough they should not be in it. There is no question of race in that for me. I did not get much postsecondary education in Alaska, so there were not too many white racists trying to keep me from succeeding as there had been all the way through public school in Alaska.

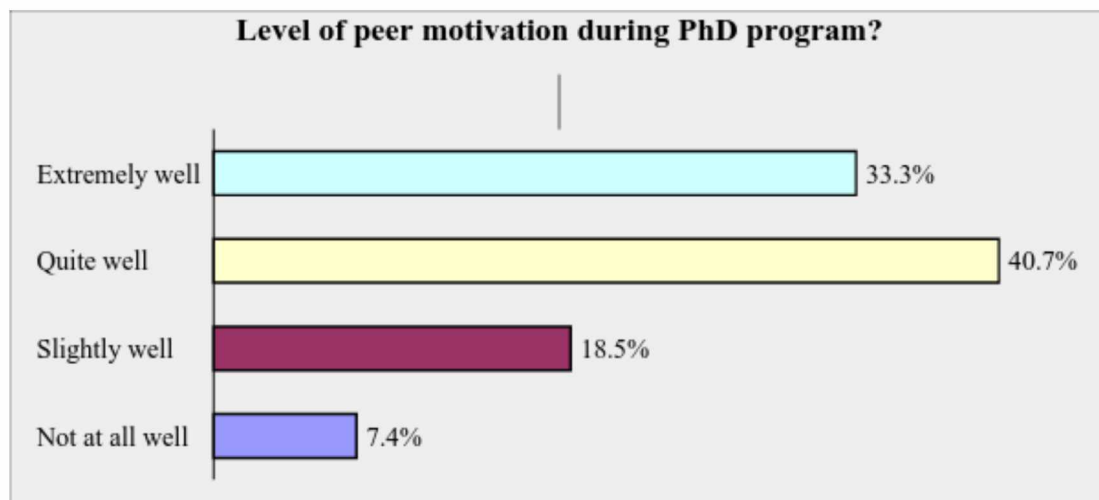
At the PhD level, really, you MUST be self-motivated...particularly to complete the PhD thesis in a timely way. After 12 months of doctoral fieldwork, I completed my PhD thesis, with approvals, in six months; and not four or five years, which seemed to be the

norm at [West Coast] university. I was simply self-motivated, and, again, at that point and, in life, you have to be.

Regarding social supports, it actually depends on the individual, as far as whether or not they deem any form of social supports as significant during their PhD journey.

#### **5.1.7 Peer supports**

Seventy four percent of the population described their peer support network as good or exceptional in providing motivation through their program. Figure 5.5 shows the level of support the Alaska Native scholars received from their peers.



***Figure 5.5: Level of peer motivational support for Alaska Native PhD graduates during their PhD program***

Several Alaska Native PhD graduates provided specific comments on the theme of peer motivation. As one PhD scholar stated, “I went to graduate school on the [East Coast] and connected with a Native student group there. We were all struggling with alienation.” The Indigenous scholars had to overcome numerous challenges, both within and outside of their institutions, and most of them cited a reliance on the support and encouragement of peer students either in their program or in their institution.

Other comments on peer support systems included:

In our PhD program, we had critical mass - Six of us Native/Indigenous PhDs at once.

We were each other's support system and leaned on each other.

I was part of a 12-person cohort. I was the only Native student. Half of our cohorts were international students. We were initially somewhat close. As the coursework grew more difficult and we pursued our own research interests, we spent less time together.

The [peer group] was succeeding, so I figured I could too. They were very encouraging...when I was frustrated and wanted to quit, they would listen and then tell me it would get better and to carry on.

A few survey respondents recounted their experience in the absence of peer support, stating "I was usually not well motivated from my peers." Another commented: "The few in my cohort were helpful when we lived in the same community. Once I returned home to write I missed the support." While these students succeeded in their programs when in a peer-rich environment, they clearly recognized the absence of the benefit of like-minded peers when isolated from them.

Two Alaska Native scholars shared very unfortunate experiences regarding their peer support networks.

Most of the time peer motivation was negative, I wanted to prove them wrong and was not satisfied with how they wanted to keep our field in the status quo (e.g., not inclusive of traditional Indigenous knowledge or other "radical" ways of thinking).

One of the three thought she knew more than us and belittled me because in her eyes I was less Alaska Native than she was. I got ZERO support from this individual.

When asked how often the Alaska Native PhD survey participants had face-to-face social support with their peers, 59% said they met with their peers fairly or very often, while 38% said occasionally. A very small fraction (4%) of students worked in isolation, without face-to-face social support from peers.

The PhDs commented they met with peers to work on lab work. Some Alaska Native scholars commented on meeting advisors or peers on campus or at gatherings on campus. One PhD graduate stated, “I spent time with my cohort more than my own husband and children.” The level of peer support varied. Another PhD graduate commented, “I met with peers to talk about common goals, but not because I needed them to press me to complete my tasks.” One respondent commented on meeting four times a year with her cohort. Other participants saw their peers daily, or “many times” on campus. Given that all of these PhD participants successfully completed their programs, the percentages are high with support, which means that peer support was an understated, vital contributing factor leading to their PhD success. The small fraction without supports was uncommon amongst Alaska Native PhD students. In summary, more than half did meet face to face with peers with the focus being on their academic work and goal to finish their program.

#### **5.1.8 Social supports with media and technology**

When asked if social media or technology was a positive factor supporting degree completion, 53% responded no. Of those responding yes, the leading communications technology was the phone/mobile phone (40%) followed by email (38%). Twenty four percent of

the students used Facebook, Twitter, or other social media platforms to aid networking related to their PhD pursuit.

Seventy four percent of the Alaska Native PhD graduates stated they never or only occasionally used social media networks as a social support with peers, while 26% stated they used it often or fairly often with their peers.

Many Alaska Native PhD graduates were enrolled in their programs before the widespread use of media and technology. Some of the Indigenous PhD scholars also shared their wit in some of the responses to the question relating to social media and technology support during their PhD program:

It really did not exist in those days!

I predated such phenomena.

Technology was fairly young when I went through graduate school. The Internet was Darpa-net.

I am computer illiterate and for some unknown reason proud of it. I am a natural social networker and used that skill in many ways. For example, my students nudged me along.

I was in graduate school from 1986 to 1991 and e-mail was not used too much. Old school for sure!

One Alaska Native PhD participant shared how she used multimedia to keep her language and Native knowledge strong. She stated:

I still have emails from my aunt, who was instrumental in teaching me how to be Iñupiaq from two thousand miles away. :) She was very encouraging. I also called home once a week, and had friends from home on MySpace (I'm old) and Facebook.

It is likely that digital connectivity will play an increasing role in the success of future Alaska Native PhD students. Technology as a communication tool and for academic support is of increasing importance in graduate programs. More resources such as analysis platforms, survey instruments, cyber storage spaces, and references are digital in this day and age. These will make research efforts for aspiring Alaska Native PhDs less of a challenge.

### 5.1.9 Financial support

On possibly the most critical factor influencing the successful attainment of a PhD, 57% of the students received either 100% or nearly 100% financial support of their degree program from tuition assistance of some type. Another 7% received 75% tuition assistance of their program expenses. One third of the Alaska Native PhD students received no financial support or tuition assistance for their PhD program, which supports the comments some of them made on having to work on or off campus during their doctoral program. Table 5.1 shows the levels of tuition assistance Alaska Native PhD students received. The tuition assistance includes any type of funding that decreased the cost of their graduate tuition fees.

**Table 5.1:** Tuition assistance received by Alaska Native PhD graduates

Tuition assistance Amount Received by Alaska Native PhD Graduate		
Answer Options	Percent Response	Response Count
100%	43.6%	24
I did not receive tuition assistance	32.7%	18
Nearly 100%	12.7%	7
75%	7.3%	4
25%	1.8%	1
50%	1.8%	1
Answered question		55
Skipped question		4



Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations or tribal entities played an important role in a little over half of these students, providing some level of tuition support to 53% of the Alaska Native PhD graduates. Alaska Native residents belong to regional Alaska Native business corporations based on where they live and/or where they enrolled. ANCSA, a federal land claims settlement act, was signed into law in December 1971. Twelve Alaska Native regional corporations aimed to control their allotted land, promote economy and education, and preserve cultural knowledge and language of their people. ANCSA had not yet been fully developed for some of the earlier Alaska Native PhD graduates, which accounts for some respondents not receiving ANCSA support.

Thirty-eight, or a little more than one third, of the Alaska Native PhD graduates did not receive Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) funding during their PhD endeavor. Several commented on receiving tribal corporation scholarships independent of ANCSA corporation support. Sources of tribal based tuition support that respondents referenced included: Native Village of Afognak, The Afognak Native Corporation, The Cook Inlet Regional Incorporated Foundation, Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Huna Totem, and Goldbelt Corporation. Other students commented on receiving funds from their university rural campus, their advisor, an Indian Education Scholarship and a American Indian Scholarship.

Another student expressed no ANCSA support by stating, “[Native agency] sent me \$500 to [West Coast university], where I was not a student. I did not receive funds from ANCSA. I did not qualify for my West Coast college scholarships with being over 25 years old. I got very little financial support.”

Although over half of the participants received some level of financial support, the amount of financial support from any type of Native organizations was usually a very small percentage of their PhD program. Table 5.2 below shows that 74% percent of the students reported that the scholarships accounted for only 10% or no financial aid from Alaska Native/American Indian programs. Twenty-six percent reported this source accounted for between 10-75%, and only two students were 100% supported by Alaska Native/American Indian based scholarships. Table 5.2 shows the funding percentage of tuition scholarship contributed to their doctoral program. Table 5.1 shows the percentage of participants who received any funding from Alaska Native/American Indian scholarship. Table 5.2 shows the funding amount of their PhD program was covered by Alaska Native/American Indian scholarship.

**Table 5.2:** Amount of funding from Alaska Native/American Indian scholarships

Percentage of tuition assistance received from Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) scholarships?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
None	37.0%	20
10%	37.0%	20
25%	14.8%	8
50%	1.9%	1
75%	5.6%	3
100%	3.7%	2
Answered Question		54
Skipped Question		5

Other than scholarships earmarked for Alaska Native/American Indian students, 52% of the Alaska Native PhD graduates said they received funding from other scholarships, while 26% said they received no financial assistance outside of Alaska Native/American Indian funding sources.

In summary, financial aid played a vital role for the majority of Alaska Native PhD students, whether through Alaska Native funds, scholarships through their institutions, or other funding sources.

#### **5.1.10 Study environment**

When given the opportunity for multiple responses on a question of study environment, Alaska Native PhD graduates identified their preferred approach was to study alone (62%) and at a work space in their home (73%). However, 60% also identified utilizing a workspace on campus. Forty-seven percent of the Indigenous scholars identified working best in the evenings, while 31% stated they worked best in the mornings. Thirty-one percent also stated they worked at various times of the day. Thirteen percent stated they studied best in small groups, while 30% stated they worked best alone and in small groups. None of the respondents stated they worked best in large groups.

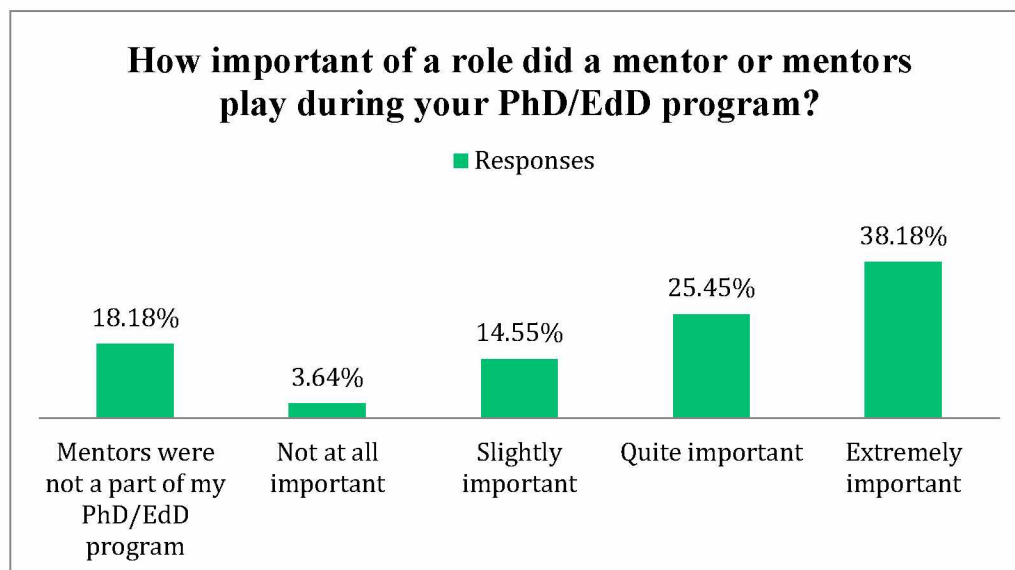
Forty-five percent of the Indigenous scholars stated that no small or large group learning was required by their instructor or graduate program, while 26% of the students said they had required small group study times. Twenty-three percent stated the small group study times were optional. Thirty-six percent of the Alaska Native PhD students stated they created the small group work or partner work schedule during their doctoral program.

#### **5.1.11 Mentor support**

A strong pattern exists with the role mentors played in student success. A mentor offers more support than an advisor, such as assistance, support, wisdom and respect to the graduate student (University of Washington, 2017). The University of Washington (2017) defines the graduate school mentor as:

In graduate school, mentoring relationships are close, individualized relationships that develop over time between a graduate student and one or more faculty members, or with other professionals who have a strong interest in the student's educational and career goals. It includes not only academic guidance, but also prolonged nurturing of the student's personal, scholarly and professional development. (University of Washington)

Mentors can have a working relationship with the graduate student and sometimes be an advisor to the student as well. The mentorship is the relationship between the mentor and the graduate student. When examining the role of mentors in the PhD graduates' success, 64% of the Alaska Native PhD survey population considered mentors an important factor and 35% of the population received mentoring weekly. Frequent contact via weekly or monthly, on site, or remotely played a vital role in Alaska Native PhD graduate success during their studies. Figure 5.6 shown below displays survey results of the significance of mentorships during the Alaska Native scholars' PhD journey. 55 responded and 4 skipped the question.



**Figure 5.6: Significance of mentorships during Alaska Native students' PhD program**

Several comments were shared on the importance of mentors. One scholar stated, “Mentorship can make all the difference in the world. As a professor, I have seen that, and I am committed to providing it. I did not have good mentorship myself.” Comments on how mentorships helped them included the sharing of study strategies and the bonds developed through solid cohort friendships among students in the same program.

One person shared having mostly elders as mentors. Another Alaska Native survey participant stated elders were their inspiration and the participant felt it was important to make the elders and language teachers proud. Another Alaska Native scholar stated, “I would not have succeeded without their mentorship.” Based on the 63% who found mentorships quite or extremely important and the additional comments from many Alaska Native PhD graduates, those who had mentorships benefited greatly from the support, wisdom, and guidance of their mentors.

## **5.2 Resilience, Tenacity, and Overcoming Challenges: Survey Participants Speak Out**

Most of the survey participants shared their challenges, then strategies to overcome barriers to graduation. Fifty-nine percent of the PhD participants expressed having very few challenges within the university. The following are examples of some articulated hardships.

I worked 60-70 hours a week in addition to full-time PhD.

I had to work hard on everything. From the start to finishing, the odds of my success always felt like they were against me.

I had planned to wait until later in life, but took a special scholarship opportunity when it came up, when I was seven months pregnant. Having a young family while getting my PhD was tough, but I felt that the opportunity I was given was a "sign" in some way not to wait until later.

Becoming sober taught me to concentrate and my fear of failure left me.

I was quite motivated in spite of the fact that most adults and students made assumptions about my capabilities, my aspirations, and me because I am a dark-skinned Iñupiaq Alaska Native.

The word “challenges” does not seem to adequately define what several Alaska Native PhD graduates endured during their doctoral studies. Twenty five percent of participants said they had “life changing events” that created challenges or barriers during their doctoral program. One participant had a spouse pass on. Another had a parent pass on. At least a couple of the Alaska Native scholars experienced divorce during their doctoral studies. There were likely other hardships not mentioned. Two participants commented on struggles with alcohol they overcame during their doctoral journey. Two categories receiving the highest percentage of responses represented challenges or barriers outside of the university system. The primary areas of conflict in this category were family responsibilities and financial challenges. Thirty seven percent of the participants had children or family responsibilities while going to school. Thirty seven percent of the participants mentioned financial issues as a burden. Several of them mentioned working multiple jobs. Demands of employment were often in conflict with PhD work, but also served as a motivator to finish their PhD program in a timely manner.

One survey participant found self-motivation in the challenge of “beating the odds,” in other words, they used the knowledge of the statistical unlikelihood of becoming an Alaska Native PhD to drive themselves to success. Similarly, another graduate was motivated to overcome prejudices based on their ethnic background. Some of the Indigenous scholars did not have support networks in their colleges and had to contend with their academic and cultural uniqueness alone. Frequently, respondents who experienced cultural isolation and lacked academic mentors cited these things as challenges.

### **5.3 Challenges and Barriers Specific to Alaska Native PhD Graduates during PhD Journey**

Several scholars discussed barriers within and outside of their universities. While this analysis does not evaluate barriers common to all ethnicities, the analysis suggests there are unique barriers to Alaska Natives that potentially account for their low numbers of completion. A challenge faced by some Indigenous scholars was family members had a lack of understanding of their degree program. Sometimes they lacked the ability to communicate with their family on their research topic, although several expressed they knew their family supported them as best they could.

Over 50% did not experience many major challenges or barriers internal to the university during the PhD journey. A main barrier that emerged was a combination of specific challenges and barriers related to geography. Traveling out of state to go to college had many challenges. Distance was a huge challenge. Students must pay for travel to and from an airport that flies south, round trip. College student “travel seasons” are particularly expensive during high-volume travel times to and from Alaska. This means seats at a decent price are limited. To travel out of state from anywhere “off the road system” requires time to get to a main airport that has large

jets that “fly south” or to “the lower 48.” This often can take a day. Most communities in Alaska require a ferry, small plane, skiff, or jet to get to one of the main airports. If a student is traveling in the winter or spring, an added barrier is the weather, which can be unpredictable. Adding to the distance issue was unplanned trips “home” due to family emergencies. Several participants expressed grief with not being able to attend to sick or dying family members when they were in their doctoral programs. It was a sacrifice they knew they had to make, which is hard to put into words.

Another unique challenge related to Alaska Native PhD graduate students’ geographical barrier was lack of options or accessibility to doctoral field program options near them. Alaska universities have a limited choice of doctoral programs, so out of state education for a doctoral degree was often the choice. There have been recent efforts made to increase options and allow more students in PhD programs.

For some Alaska Native PhDs, cultural differences in their geographical location were also a challenge. Even with their educational and life experiences, some of them still experienced culture shock in the Western institutions they attended.

One interviewee’s doctoral degree program required her to be on their campus at their numerous campus sites around the country each year. Her family in Alaska has always been deeply involved in cultural events. She had to sacrifice a great deal for several years with missing events due to the distance it would take to get to Alaska and the time it would have taken from her studies. She stated the following:

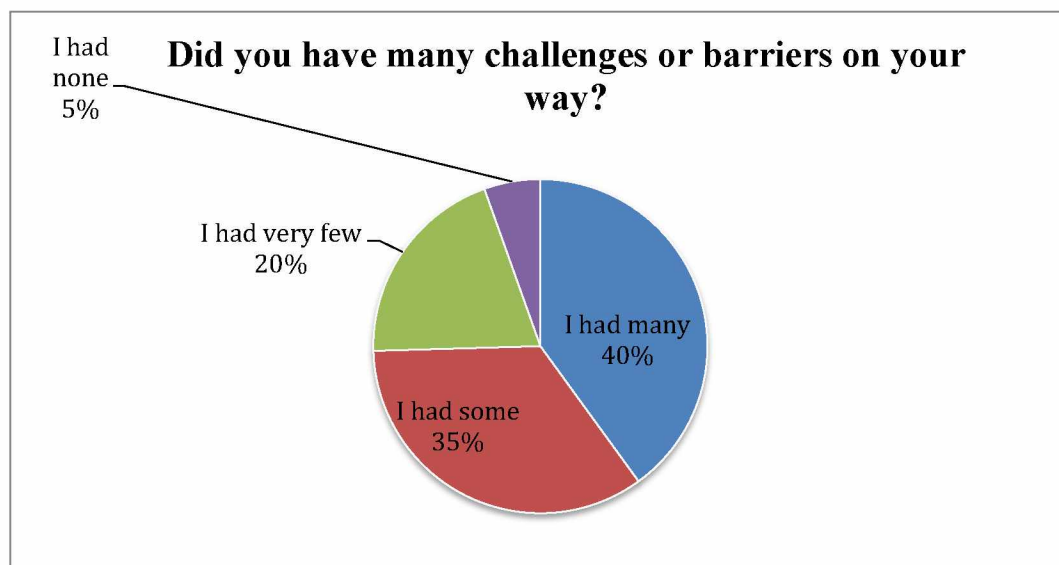
... I don’t know how often I had to say, “I’m not going to dinner, and I’m not going to this event...I didn’t really take long vacations or take trips to [rural community] and visit my family... my parents and my husband, probably my husband the most, had to listen to



all of my ideas...I had a really immense amount of support for school, even from people who really didn't understand what it meant or what good it would do for all of us, or if it could do any good for us. It was definitely supportive.

Her testimony of sacrifices her family, loved one, and coworkers had to make was a typical example of challenges Alaska Native PhD graduates faced during their doctoral journey.

When asked to categorize the barriers to completing the program during their doctoral program, 25% of the research participants cited they had few or no barriers and 75% cited they had some or many barriers. Figure 5.7 depicts the perceptions of challenges and barriers of the respondents.



***Figure 5.7: Amount of challenges and barriers during PhD Journey for Alaska Native PhD graduates***

There was not an option for comments on this particular survey question, but following this question, participants addressed challenges and barriers within the university atmosphere and outside of the university system during their doctoral journey. Nothing stands out regarding their

response to this question, as pretty similar populations had many, some, or few challenges and barriers when answering this broad question.

### 5.3.1 Challenges and barriers students encountered outside of the university

Some more specific questions provided room for comments related to specific challenges and barriers related to experiences within and outside, or external to the university system during the participants' PhD journey. More respondents cited challenges and barriers outside of the university than within their institution. The comment examples are taken from the survey section the participants answered in either, challenges and barriers external to, or within the university.

Table 5.3 shows a breakdown of external challenges mentioned.

**Table 5.3:** Alaska Native PhD graduates typically encountered some challenges and barriers outside of the university during their doctoral journey

Challenges and Barriers outside of the university	Percentage
Family responsibilities	40.0%
Financial circumstances	40.0%
Personal issues	36.4%
Significant life event	27.3%
Cultural adjustment	23.6%
Personal illness	14.5%
Racism	12.7%
Medical family emergency	9.1%
None	7.3%

Specific comments following this table were made in this particular section as challenges and barriers external to our outside of the university. They were nonacademic issues the graduate students encountered external to the students' time working and studying at the university. Specific comments related to their challenges outside of the university were mostly family-related, financial circumstances, or personal. Approximately 23-27% stated significant life changes and cultural adjustments as significant challenges and barriers too.

Family demands were also mentioned several times, as one participant stated, “My wife and I had our second child during our doctoral program.” Three participants made comments on work stress outside of the university. Another commented related to work was mentioned by a respondent stating, “[My] job took time away from research and writing.” Travel distance to school and racism were added barriers in their comments related to external examples as challenges.

### **5.3.2 Challenges and barriers students encountered within the university**

Challenges and barriers within the university were related to situations and conditions within the university, such as issues with professors, advisors, financial tuition, study habits, coursework, and program expense. Program expense within the institution may be similar or related to the external challenge mentioned in the previous section by some respondents. The same participant mentioned the challenge of four hours of travel time to and from campus in this section, as well the previous section on external challenges. Table 5.4 shows the percentages of challenges and barriers the Alaska Native PhDs experienced in their institution.

**Table 5.4:** Challenges and barriers students encountered within the university

Challenges and Barriers within the university	Percentage
I had very little challenges or barriers in my program or institution	49.0%
I had a few challenges or barriers in my program or institution	19.6%
Physical location was not ideal	17.6%
I had several challenges and barriers in my program or institution	15.7%
Content was very challenging	13.7%
Program was too expensive	11.8%
Lack of support from advisors	9.8%
Lack of communication with professors	7.8%
Institution was not a good fit	5.9%

Evidence shows 69% of Alaska Native PhD graduates experienced fewer barriers within the university compared to outside of the university setting during the PhD journey. Challenges

specific to “within the university” were related to academics and challenges tied to the university regarding coursework, faculty, study skills, and programs.

One PhD discussed the academic challenges of writing, while another discussed the challenge of starting a PhD program at 50 years old and shared that with a shorter memory and longer study times were needed. Another Alaska Native PhD graduate shared the challenges of attaining several degrees at a large West Coast university, while serving on many committees at the university. Other comments were as follows:

No support at critical times. I raised three children through all of this. Racism [occurred] early and often. I was lied to and encountered sexism. [Also the challenge of] Rigor of program (teaching my own classes while taking classes)

Difficulty finding faculty who could encourage my exploration of Indigenous theories and methods; quantitative research was emphasized to the exclusion of others.

A committee member decided I didn't deserve a PhD and tried to prevent me from getting it.

The most frequent comments revolved around course content and specific requirements for a dissertation. One comment on course content and support during the dissertation phase, a participant stated, “The weekly conversations we had along with the co-chair made it more real with the fact that I was going to complete my dissertation.” This candidate’s response displayed a sense of humor, which itself can be a self-supporting strategy during the PhD journey.

A number of Indigenous scholars commented on the lack of Native faculty. A comment relating to this was, “No Native faculty or PhD students in my cohort; Professors did not understand/encourage my areas of study.”

An Alaska Native PhD graduate shared a noteworthy comment relating to perhaps bigger challenges following their degree program. The scholar stated:

While many aspects of my career as a graduate student were challenging, they prepared me for what I would be challenged with once I was back in my own community, which has been harder. We are very cruel to those with a higher education.

Although Alaska Native PhDs endured these challenges, 95% were “extremely or highly motivated” to pursue their PhD and they did. This was a different question than the pivotal point of motivation. It would be interesting to know if the larger population shares these sentiments.

#### **5.4 Pivotal Point (During Program) when PhD Student was Motivated**

Several participants shared a particular pivotal point during their doctoral program that carried them through to completion, while a significant number recalled a steady and consistent level of effort required to meet the program’s challenges. Of the participants who chose to discuss their motivational apex, there was an even split with stressful or enjoyable motivators. Table 5.5 shows their motivational gain, if any, during their program.

**Table 5.5:** Pivotal point of motivation during program for Alaska Native PhD graduates

Was there a pivotal point, where you were most motivated during your PhD/EdD program? (You can choose multiple answers)		
Motivation Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I wasn't very motivated in my program as it was a challenge the entire journey	1.9%	1
I was most motivated in the beginning of my program	9.4%	5
I was most motivated in the middle of my program	7.5%	4
I was most motivated toward the end of my program	24.5%	13
I was always motivated in my program	62.3%	33

Table 5.5 continued

Other (Briefly explain if other)	16
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Several Alaska Native PhD graduates experienced the ability to incrementally use challenges positively as motivational milestones that pushed them along their journey. Understanding these PhDs coping strategies and mindset during challenging phases of their program may assist aspiring Alaska Native graduate students.

The 25% of respondents who experienced an increased level of motivation toward the end of their degree program was evenly split in characterizing a tipping point or a moment of epiphany in their program path, some driven by negative experiences, some drawn towards completion by positive reinforcements. Stress-driven pivotal points mentioned included: divorce, debt, fear of failure, depression, overwhelming challenge of journey, being ill-prepared, and personal feeling of negative odds against oneself. One respondent expressed, “After my classes were out of the way and after my comps (oral and written comprehensive exams) were done, I don't know if it was so much motivation but relief.”

A survey participant describing a steady level of academic motivation shared a challenge arising towards the end of their PhD program. This participant said, “While I was always motivated, I did have some significant battles with stress and depression while in the writing phase.” Another participant echoed the writing phase being a pivotal point in motivation levels. The Alaska Native PhD graduate stated, “During my written comprehensive exams. I went through a divorce and then became very anxious about writing.” Unexpected internal struggles may have hindered but did not deter Alaska Native PhD graduates. In some cases, it pushed them harder.

## **5.5 Benefits and Opportunities for PhDs upon Doctoral Degree Completion**

Most of the Alaska Native PhD graduates reported reaping benefits upon completing their PhD degrees. The following themes are ranked in order of their frequency of comments in the survey data. Five themes have emerged from highest to lowest number of received comments on the topic: (a) prestigious opportunities, (b) employment opportunities, (c) university opportunities and advancement, (d) Native advocacy, and (e) self-esteem enhancement.

### **5.5.1 Prestigious opportunities**

Alaska Native PhDs shared many opportunities that came about after they had attained their PhD degree. Some of these state, national, and international opportunities are as follows:

I obtained the career success and monetary rewards that I sought. I have achieved recognition as a leader in my field of conservation science and have been able to support and help AK and other Native communities obtain their goals with respect to marine resource use.

With my degrees and Ph.D. I have had great jobs. I have worked in a variety of places (Indian Health Service, Indian health projects, Tribal projects and at the university) and I have enjoyed them all. I have had my dream. My work with Natives and American Indians was interesting and fun and I made many friends. I am now retired and I can say it was a full life doing interesting work. I tried to give back.

Afforded me a global network of leaders; allowed me to get my foot in the door with national research organizations like National Indian Health (NIH) and National Science

Foundation (NSF), to serve as a principal investigator for instance; and taught me the value of inquiry and messaging.

It has opened up many doors to a world that were inaccessible in the past.

Alaska Native PhD graduates shared opportunities that allowed them to travel, to network on a global scale, to make more money, and to become advocates and leaders in their degree fields. Many of the opportunities they experienced were positive, rewarding, an unexpected. Most Alaska Native PhDs voiced feeling grateful for their opportunities.

### **5.5.2 Employment opportunities**

Alaska Native scholars shared the careers they encountered upon their PhD journey and completion. These stories demonstrate their passion for their field, their love for their jobs, and the benefits of their jobs. They stated the following:

I did challenging calculations for my thesis and taught courses in classical physics, numerical analysis and quantum mechanics. These have given me a positive confidence in my work as a physicist/engineer.

It has given me my life - professionally.

Love my career and the long-term relationships I have developed through the dissertation fieldwork I did in the communities in my home region.



The job I have today was totally unexpected and I doubt I would have been selected without the PhD. It has given me the clout I needed to take a leadership role both in my community and within the state.

I am able to be very financially secure and to be challenged in my job through leadership opportunities.

Survey respondents discussed the prestige, respect, financial gains, and love for their careers they encountered upon attainment of their doctoral degrees. The doctoral degree was vital in setting up Alaska Native PhDs for careers they were passionate about.

### **5.5.3 University opportunity and advancement**

Several Alaska Native scholars shared their employment opportunities at universities across the country. They teach and research in a variety of degree fields, and offered the following thoughts on their university job opportunities:

My faculty position is wonderful. It is hugely rewarding to work with students and faculty in higher education. The research I did during the PhD continues to inform my work today.

I have a continuing interest in educational issues. Having the doctorate made me competitive in my profession for a higher level of managerial positions in the education field. It gave me tools to evaluate research and program value.

I literally could not have a postdoctoral fellowship without being post - doctoral :)

It has assured me good jobs. My scholarship is recognized by my peers internationally. I work at a university that ranks globally in the top 120. I am paid very well.

Contrary to university faculty hiring options, one PhD graduate commented on the competitiveness of attaining a job at the postsecondary level in Alaska. The PhD graduate said, “Make sure Alaska Native PhDs understand before they begin that there are only a few positions at [a particular university system], so they are not likely to work near home.”

#### **5.5.4 Native advocacy**

Two of the Alaska Native PhD graduates shared their roles in supporting Native advocacy. One PhD shared the benefits and importance of giving back to the community. The scholar stated:

In so many ways, being a part of a university has provided prestige and power to accomplish many things that help me give back to Indigenous communities around the world. I have faced my own fears and continue to do so. I have had the opportunity to work with students of color. I am impacting our mainstream faculty in positive ways to see the value of diversity. I am working to modify or tailor evidence-based substance abuse treatments and providing trainings to Indigenous groups and bringing them to communities via research. I feel I have been impacting the federal funding agencies in substance abuse funding. My daughter will have an easier time should she seek higher education. I have a nice home and car. I enjoy my work. I do not have to do manual labor as my father did or work in a position of little power.

This PhD is a professor and is making a difference by supporting students and giving back to not only the local community, but to students around the globe.

### **5.5.5 Self-Esteem enhancement**

Several Alaska Native scholars discussed how the PhD intrinsically benefited them. They gave examples of positive emotions and improved self-esteem, including the following:

This degree has provided me with personal and professional growth that allows me to serve others in a culturally responsive capacity, bridging my education together with my Native ways of knowing.

It has given me self-confidence and ability to become an educational leader.

It has benefitted me greatly. I dove into the rigors of academia knowing the challenges it would have, but that I, being a doctoral student, had all what it takes to persevere.

I still meet people who just cannot believe I am a doctor. Others bust their buttons that I am a doctor. I relish the latter and put up with the former.

The skills I learned in how to assess a task and how to develop a plan to accomplish it has given me much satisfaction. There are probably many that I have even yet realized. At the most basic level a PhD teaches critical thinking, synthesis of complex data and issues, communication to broader audiences

The academic rewards are a confidence builder. One PhD respondent shared positive messages from peers: “I have received messages that I am an inspiration and role model, and that

others are proud of me.” Their comments display the positive character traits they have and the rewards of their accomplishments.

The survey asked Alaska Native PhDs to share a word or short word phrase to describe their doctoral journey. Figure 5.8 is a compilation of their words in a form of a word cloud. A larger word font symbolizes more responses with that word.

*Figure 5.8: Alaska Native PhDs' word to describe their PhD journey displayed in a word cloud*



Not so surprisingly, most of these words were positive. Their words were showing their elation, relief, and feeling of victory for the most part.

### **5.7 Interpretation of the Findings**

Alaska Native PhD graduates had some similar findings as the Maher et al. (2004) study regarding contributing factors to successful completion of a PhD degree and showed early completers with high percentages in particular areas. Some of the areas the Maher et al. (2004) study mirrored the Alaska Native PhD study were: goal completed in a timely manner, financial aid from within or sources outside of the university, a supportive advisor, and support from other doctoral students. These factors of social, academic, and financial supports were key factors with Alaska Native PhD graduates too, as presented in this chapter.

Data from the survey showed Alaska Native PhDs having an even split of 40% with having experienced “few” or 40% having experienced “many” barriers during their PhD journey. PhDs did experience a variety of forms of challenges and barriers. Mather et al. (2004) presented several similar challenges Alaska Native PhDs encountered: funding, family responsibilities, periods of lack of motivation, and personal illness or issues. The comments were not widespread, particularly in the motivation section. Not all of the PhDs gave specific examples of challenges, but the challenges were mainly external to their college campuses. Only 12% of the Alaska Native PhDs mentioned racism as a challenge. It was unclear if the participants in this study experienced racism within their institution or external to the universities. Several examples of supportive cultural programs at colleges were shared in this study.

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## **Chapter Six: Ten Students' Stories: Adding Context and Depth Through Personal Narratives**

The individual stories help provide context and depth to the survey results presented in Chapters Four and Five. Participants candidly discussed their challenges, resilient efforts, support networks, and mentors encountered during their journey. The first section of Chapter Six shares each story from the ten interviewed participants. Following their stories is a summary of common traits as well as unique contributions they would like to share with future Alaska Native graduate students. Each of these scholars had inspiring stories of resilience, ranging from challenges during their undergraduate programs to the writing phase and strategies during their doctoral dissertation.

Six of the ten participants serve as university faculty within or outside of Alaska. Three participants work in major leadership or administrative roles, and one is a teacher who is prepared to work in a school leadership role when he feels ready. Most of the professors have numerous leadership responsibilities, including publishing scholarly research. A few of the participants had at least one parent who was fluent in their Alaska Native language.

A primary observable trait during the interview process was how humble and 'down to earth' each of the PhD interviewed participants were. There was not an air of arrogance, but of gratitude during the interview process. The scholars viewed their PhD attainment as an opportunity or a gift that reaped benefits in their careers and lifestyles. Another noticeable trait was their passion for the degree field.

A common experience shared by each participant was the tenuous journey throughout the PhD program. Whether it was a lonely path, or a journey endured with loved ones it was



exceedingly difficult. Some shared heartfelt moments of hardships and periods of strength and discovery, as well as suggestions for supports and successful strategies.

Several interview participants spoke highly of their spousal or partner support during their arduous journey. It was apparent how each of them had significant support from someone or a group of people, sometimes a network of friends, peers, professors, or advisors helping them along their path.

Every participant offered something slightly different advice to Alaska Native graduate students.

## **6.1 Alaska Native PhD Interview Participants' Journeys to Their PhD**

### **6.1.1 Charlie's experience: "My writing job"**

Charlie, an Iñupiaq male, grew up in an isolated, northern Alaska rural community until high school. His father was Caucasian and his mother was Iñupiaq. He was raised with his Iñupiaq identity since his mother mainly raised him while his father was often away and working. His father did not graduate from high school and his mother was his strong, influential figure during his upbringing. His mother was passively bilingual. She responded in Iñupiat but did not speak it fluently. She went to boarding schools but did not graduate from high school. His aunt, however, did graduate and finished college with a nursing degree. He did not realize his aunt's bachelor's degree was so important at the time she received it. He moved to a large Alaskan city with his parents when he entered high school. Regarding challenges, he first felt the stigma of racism and poverty when he moved to the urban area. He was embarrassed about being poor. The experience pushed him and he enjoyed the challenge. However, a great deal of his academic drive was internal, with a love for learning. He was one of very few Alaska Natives in the high school honor's classes at the time. He was interested in many topics. He particularly

enjoyed anthropology. Charlie was always competitive in school, with a thirst for inquiry and learning. In his new, larger school, he found an academically mixed group with which he could identify. He found success and recognition, particularly from an honor's English teacher, who inspired him.

Charlie discovered an East Coast, Ivy League school he wanted to attend. He was seventeen years old and did not know how to pick out a college. He stated, "The only reason I picked my college was because of Carl Sagan. No one really prepared me. But my college was an amazing experience, which I heard is in the countryside and that would be a nice transition." Charlie applied and was accepted into the program. He had a great experience and graduated. He continued his education and earned his master's degree. He then attended a public California university for his terminal degree. Like several of these Alaska Native PhD scholars, he had several offers to attend many of our nation's best colleges in undergraduate and graduate schools.

Charlie encountered challenges at the West Coast University. He took a very long time to complete his PhD degree, although he greatly enjoyed his lengthy journey. It is unknown how long he was in his program, but it was not less than five years. He had an excellent routine. He worked as a paid graduate student in an engaging academic environment while working on his degree. His well-endowed university could financially support his work for many years. He greatly enjoyed the social and academic aspects of his program. He also lived comfortably within his means, but realized he had to move forward with his life and think of the 'next steps' beyond being a professional student. He spent time overseas, then came back to finish his degree at his West Coast university. He had strong support from his partner and friends throughout his program.

Time management and staying focused are challenges for many PhD candidates, since there is often little accountability for self-established writing deadlines. Charlie realized he needed to get serious and think about his future. He came up with a solution during the process of writing his dissertation. He gave some great advice to Alaska Native graduate students.

He figured out a way to overcome the issues of time management, overcommitting, and ‘time on task’ by creating a grassroots program at his university. He established a small, focused group study, which involved quiet, personal writing time called, “My Writing Job.” Charlie stated:

I set up “My Writing Job” as a nine to five writing session where we all met. We agreed that we would show up at nine o'clock in the morning. I got a room, you know, that was our room where we all got together. There were about twelve of us. We just met every day, Monday through Friday, from nine to five, and we called it “My Writing Job.”

The efficiency and attractiveness of the model allowed the participants a time and space to work without distraction or interruption. When friends would ask what he was doing, he had a quick, honest response that he was going to “My Writing Job,” with no questions asked. He also mentioned that it was a great way to build a social circle with this group. They bonded and soon regularly prepared and ate meals together. He enthusiastically recommended this model to other graduate students in their writing phase, which was still in place after he graduated. His university currently has a weblink for dissertation support groups, although “My writing group” was not located today. The website did share Boot Camp type rules he shared. His advice to Alaska Native graduate students would be to, “find a writing group, or establish one if you cannot find one. There are sources online too.”

Charlie earned his PhD in anthropology. He is a humble Alaska Native corporation director, representing Alaskan issues in the nation's capital city. He mentioned he does not share that he has a PhD degree, as it may not be important in his role. He was grateful that his PhD had helped him to obtain his current job opportunity. Charlie's salary has helped to pay off his college debt in a timely manner.

#### **6.1.2 Harold's Experience: Time Management with an Egg Timer**

Harold, a Yup'ik male, attended and graduated from a public school in a Western Alaska rural community with fewer than 100 residents. He was fortunate to grow up speaking his Yugtun language and practice cultural traditions. His mother never attended school, and he learned to speak English outside of his home. He had Russian ancestry, but did not remember Russian traditions, other than some food dishes.

Harold completed his bachelor's degree in an Alaskan city. He recalled two influential professors in his undergraduate program. One was a Jewish professor, who now teaches and completes research at a Southwest university. The other was an African American professor, who is now nationally known for her work with "cultural conflict in the academy." One of the two professors told Harold, "You need to get your PhD," during his undergraduate journey.

He responded he had not yet earned his bachelor's degree and questioned what she was saying. They both saw beyond what Harold could see at the time. He stated:

They saw something that of course I could not see or even fathom in terms of pursuing something that nobody in my -- no person in my region could even conceptualize. So for that, for them two, I am very, very grateful that they saw something that they could. They saw what would benefit me in my future. I am continually grateful for those two wonderful people.

Harold benefited from his bachelor's degree and taught elementary school for four years. He then landed an opportunity to attend a well-known competitive graduate school on the East Coast. Harold had significant academic support from professors, as well as master's and PhD scholarship funding in his joint degree program. Regrettably for him, he did not finish the doctoral degree in this reputable program. He felt extremely guilty, as he puts it, "very, very, very guilty." Part of his guilt stemmed from receiving at least three prestigious scholarships. His father, whom he learned a great deal from, passed on while he was in school, which was one of the reasons he did not finish the doctoral program. He was close to finishing, and the guilt stayed with him for many years. He felt guilty being away from family, especially being the youngest son.

Harold's father told him, "So long as people have tongues, it is through that that they will continue to speak" He raised his finger up toward me and said in Yup'ik, "but I've okay-ed you to go to school because I did not have that opportunity."

He had another opportunity to complete a doctoral program with support through a linguistics graduate funding source in his home state of Alaska. There was one caveat that concerned him. It was the "assessment" word in this program. He was apprehensive because he was not sure he would fulfill grant requirements with this assessment or testing term, in his language courses. Ultimately, he realized how much assessment would help him in his quest to research and 'grow' his Indigenous language in Alaska. He was not going to quit with his next doctoral degree opportunity.

Harold said his partner, now spouse, was "his first and foremost support." His spouse would listen to him cry and complain over the years, then his spouse would come back with something positive and stress the importance of the work he was doing.

His other family members were an important support for him too. His sister would tell him, “There is no turning back,” as he was nearing his final edits to his dissertation.

Other supports were his peers in the program. Their graduate topics were very different, but they would check in with each other. He also had a committee member who would edit his work. He recalls receiving one chapter and not opening it for quite some time. His professor asked if he worked on it. He replied, “I have a restraining order on Chapter Two.” His sense of humor and positive attitude were apparent and were likely contributors leading to success on his challenging quest.

Harold shared one useful writing motivator. Some advice he suggested to Alaska Native graduate students is to try to use an old fashioned, sand-in-the-glass egg timer. He consistently made time to write by following this routine:

I would devote exactly 60 minutes a day. If I had to use the bathroom for 35 minutes, I laid it on its side for that amount of time that I’d leave, so at the end of the day, I would honestly put in that 60 minutes, and after a bit, those 60 minutes became 70 minutes, and then 80 minutes. I had to start somewhere. I had to motivate myself. With an egg timer, I could have some way of acknowledging that I did put in that good and honest work.

Part of Harold’s determination to finish his PhD came from his shame of not finishing his doctoral program at the first institution with the financial and academic supports in place. He knew he could complete his terminal degree and worked harder to attain it with his second opportunity. The tactics of using an egg timer, along with his positive attitude, and support networks, were influential factors toward completion of his PhD dissertation.

Harold completed his PhD in linguistics from an Alaskan university. He is a leader in his academic field on language acquisition and has been influential at the policy level of making

Alaska Native languages official with legislative bills in Alaska in 2014. In his words, his degree has given him “a lot” of opportunities in the field of linguistics. He humbly stated:

I get called to do talks about Yup’ik or about the Yup’ik language or about language revitalization. I just recently returned from the [community] Yup’ik Immersion Program, where the Yup’ik immersion teachers invited me to do a two-day workshop in strengthening their literacy program. Things like this that I will not take for granted. I do this because I want to do it, but having a PhD has really strengthened that opportunity for me to share what little I know about the Yup’ik language so we can disseminate that to other people who are interested so that they could learn to use it as they teach for the future generations.

Harold now serves as a tenure-track professor at an Alaskan university and is he dedicated to Indigenous language acquisition in the state.

### **6.1.3 Edith’s experience: “Hard deadlines” person with a “big stick”**

Edith, a Haida and Tlingit female, was born and raised until her high school years in a rural Southeast Alaska Native village with a population of a little over 500 people. She recalled early times when her grandfather would sit all of the grandchildren down and talk to them. She shared one moment when he said, “You are going to college and are going to be a doctor.” His words resonated with her.

She then moved to the largest city in Southeast Alaska for her remaining high school years. Following high school graduation, Edith attended an East Coast college where she completed her bachelor’s degree. She then moved back to her home community where she some of her secondary education and worked for her tribe for three years. She and her husband then went back to college so he could complete his degree at her alma mater East Coast college.

After Edith's husband finished his degree, they both moved to the Northwestern region of the United States, where she worked with high school students who were receiving dual credit at a college. She was able to attend graduate school and get financial support through her job in the Northwest University. Her graduate program allowed for a great deal of flexibility and autonomy. She chose to attend the same Northwest university for her PhD degree, where she completed her master's degree. She stated it was a more nontraditional, self-directed academic structure. She completed weeklong residencies, once per quarter, for the first three year in the Northwestern city during her PhD program. She would join her PhD cohort at the institution's four different regional campus sites around the county for one week each session of her doctoral program. She would go back to her Northwest city to complete her course work, along with her job.

This instructional model let them work on their PhD via a distance education program with online courses. The advantage for her was she could work at her job while she was attending her doctoral program college. It took seven years to finish, which she felt was a long time for her. Her job at the time of her doctoral program was extremely demanding, as she worked in human resources at a corporation with a rapidly growing work force.

This model was ultimately effective for her and her peers, as they established a supportive network with one another during their doctoral program. The path was not easy for her, as she faced the pressures of her administrative job, intense graduate coursework, and some major longstanding health issues. Fortunately, she had a support network of her peers in place, as well as the ongoing support of her husband and immediate family. She raved about an incredible American Indian professor, who was also her advisor. During her writing phase, her advisor let



her check in with her weekly if she needed to talk to her. The optional check-in calls were vital to her success during her writing phase of her doctoral program.

Edith spoke candidly about the level of support from her husband and family. She brought up a point on what she sacrificed when having to repeatedly say “no”. She commented:

Gosh, for seven years I had just been working and working on my PhD. That was it. I mean, I did not really take long vacations or take trips to [rural Southeastern community] and visit my family, all those kinds of things. You do not really realize how tight your family is until you are not in that system day to day anymore and a part of that effort. After I graduated, then all of a sudden I realized how much space people gave me, and how many times they let me say no. They just offered encouragement and good wishes.

Wise words of advice that Edith would share to Alaska Native students involve the effectiveness of working with “hard deadlines” while being a graduate student and working full-time. She said:

I’m unfortunately one of those ones that really needs to be hit over the head sometimes. Just looking at my bill, oh my god, another year of this! Trying to make that case to my husband was tough. He would say, ‘You said...’ I would have to respond, ‘I know...’ But it worked out fine.

She realized the expense and how long it was taking to attain her graduate degrees. Edith’s parents were very supportive, as was her sister, and her entire extended family. She commented, “It has been kind of a long process. I felt like I had excellent support the whole way, right up to the end, where my husband was like, ‘Get it done, get it done!’ This was necessary by then because I was sick of it by then, sick of it.”

She persevered with a steadfast attitude. She stated:

I am a ‘hard deadlines’ person. I need that big stick sometimes, especially when you have been kind of looking at one big area for six and a half years and you just need to finish something (that dissertation).

Her mother, a world-class weaver, wove Edith a Ravenstail blanket with a personal story, as well as other regalia for her doctoral completion. Her mother had also done this for her sister who earned a juris doctorate degree. Edith no longer needed to commute in her flexible program and her husband had finished his degree program. They permanently moved back to Alaska following her PhD attainment in the field of leadership and change from the Northwest university. She now has an influential, administrative position at an Alaskan university. Her grandfather and parents set high expectations for her siblings and her, and all Alaska Natives.

#### **6.1.4 Corrine’s experience: Graduate application “literally pulled out of the trash”**

Corrine, a Yup’ik female, was an example of resilience and tenacity from the start of her challenging postsecondary experience. She grew up in [city] with a K-12 education at a non-accredited religious school. She later found there were some gaps in her general education, thus creating a challenging road in front of her. She attended a number of undergraduate colleges before settling and graduating from a small Western regional college. Corrine stated:

Well, you know, my story was kind of a list of don’ts. You know, I did not know anybody who ever got a doctorate. I had no idea how you did it or what you did with it in the end. All I knew was I had this love of literature. I just loved it. I ended up being an English major in my undergraduate and I wanted to continue, but I did not know at all what that meant. I wrote a horrible application for graduate school. By some miracle, I got in and just really struggled along the way until finally things started to make sense.

Then a few years in, I realized what you actually do with this degree. ...I actually do not know how I came to the idea [to attain a PhD]. No one ever encouraged me to do that.

My family always supported my educational aspirations...

Although she was not prepared for postsecondary education, Corrine had supportive parents throughout her journey. Her Yup'ik father modeled an excellent work ethic. She said he impacted her commitment to education because she watched what he did. He completed his bachelor's degree while he worked at a Native corporation leadership role and raised his family. He would often get only a few hours of sleep while working full days and going to night school. He would go to sleep and wake up at 2:00 or 3:00 AM to study, then go to work at 8:00 AM. Sometimes he would have to drop out of semesters due to extensive work travel in his Native leadership role. He would get up and start a new term again. He completed his bachelor's degree in twelve years, with maintaining his other priorities of family and work. Corrine's father was her inspirational role model, demonstrating to her the importance of education, determination, and resilience.

Her entire family was supportive. She commented, "My family has always been hugely supportive and I wouldn't have accomplished any of it without them, so I would have to say my family was number one, family and friends."

Corrine did not have much support from her professors at her Northeast university which is where she earned her PhD degree. It later helped her understand the importance of it at her current professorship job. She did find a perfect small niche of support from her Native peers. They managed to find each other and became strong supports for one another. She commented:

There were not many Native students there, but we found each other and we created a little group of friends. We became close. You know, there were different numbers depending on

the term, so between six and eight. And we met regularly. We were all kind of struggling with some of the same things, so I would say that that was really also critical for me. That was a really crucial source of support and a place where I kind of felt at home and less alienated than I did, you know, in other places in the institution.

Peer support groups played a critical role for Corrine, as she did not have strong relationships with professors or other mentors that many students seem to have. She loved the content she was studying and could not speak highly enough of her peer supports. It was still hard, but she relied on her peer group to maintain her positive outlook and successfully complete graduate school. Today, Corrine is “really committed,” as she states, to making sure incoming students have a professor or mentor who is dedicated to them, so they do not have to struggle the ways she did.

Corrine’s story serves as a great example for Alaska Native students who may not always have the confidence to pursue their graduate education but may have the potential and strong desire. She never forgot that others believed in her. She felt it was a miracle that she was accepted into graduate school. She stated:

My application was literally pulled out of the trash by somebody who just said, “Well, you know, she’s smart. This is a horrible application. Let’s let her in and see what she can do even though she’s really poorly prepared.” So you know, that is how it happened. I did not have financial aid or anything, so I really had to struggle. I only got through because I was too stubborn to quit. I just was so afraid of failing, I could not face the prospect of failing, and so I just worked really hard.

Today, she sends the message that nothing is impossible and if she could do it, others can as well. Corrine’s advice is as follows:

I tell my graduate students this: if you do not pick something that you love and you are really committed to, you are not going to finish. And I really was committed to the work I was doing. I really loved it for its own sake. So that was a big motivator for me.

Corrine also realized she had a growing awareness of cultural issues when she was in graduate school. It did not influence her decision to attend graduate school, but she developed a stronger interest in these issues when she was in college. She commented:

The fact that I grew up in a Native community and a family who was -- you know, my father's always been very active in the community in Alaska and beyond, and that really shaped what things were interesting to me and what I wanted to study.

One of the other interview participants spoke very highly of Corrine, stating she was his mentor and inspiration. He read one of her published books, which influenced him to pursue a PhD degree. Corrine's advice to Alaska Native graduate students is to choose a field in which they are committed to and passionate about. She is now an accomplished, well-respected and tenured professor at a large West Coast university. She enthusiastically stated she loves her job, as she gets to read, research, and write, as well as work with Native students and other underrepresented students at her university. She has written several publications and books advocating for Indigenous worldviews.

#### **6.1.5 Theodosia's experience: Supportive professors and mentors—crucial for negotiating and navigating the system**

Theodosia, a female Athabascan Deg Hit'an, grew up in two rural Alaska Native inland river communities, with populations under 100 residents. She spent some of her education in Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools. She eventually moved to the nearby city during her high school years.

Theodosia's path of attaining a PhD was not a lifetime goal she had envisioned. She did not really have a plan beyond her bachelor's and master's degrees. Her PhD path was an organic process that evolved into some great opportunities. Things just fell into place for her, and her mentors provided encouragement along the way. She stated, "A lot of things just kind of happened along the way and opportunities were there." She had many supports, which included her father and husband, as well as her professors and mentors. Her father was a vital support, as he helped her with her research and answered questions pertaining to her cultural background. He spoke two Dene' Athabascan languages fluently. Her decision to pursue her doctoral degree was eventually influenced by her cultural background. She said something that may resonate with many educated Alaska Natives that do not speak their language fluently. She stated:

But definitely, the focus area, the research was influenced by my background because I wanted to know more. I did not grow up speaking my language and I did not have a lot of cultural knowledge, so the work that I did at the university allowed me to gain more of that knowledge.

Her challenge was that her PhD journey was lonely due to the design of the newly established program. She was in a unique program that none of her peers were in. She said there was almost no contact with peers in her interdisciplinary program. There was not the typical program of a group of graduate peers or a cohort to work with.

Fortunately, Theodosia had strong academic supports throughout her program. She had a "good set of mentors to go to." Her professors were particularly encouraging. She was a focused student, who was excited to learn a great deal of cultural knowledge in her postsecondary program. She reiterated her professors were crucial throughout her graduate program, from getting assistance with editing her application to the writing phase. She stated:

You know, I was fortunate to work with people like [professor] who were quite adept at negotiating the system, which is often very unfriendly to any student in addition to Alaska Native student... The mentors and professors were definitely crucial in helping me to get through because I did not really have a clue. So yes, I guess that was my main support system.

The timing of her PhD program worked out well, as she was not working at the time. She was taking care of her 13-year old daughter who had a serious illness. Staying home and not working made it easier to focus on her research, reading, and writing.

While she focused her interview comments on her program, she did share some strategies that benefited her. Theodosia shared an effective learning strategy that helped her with completing her challenging, analytical coursework. Her strategy could be helpful to other Alaska Native graduate students. As an auditory learner, she learned by listening. She liked lectures. She would reinforce processing the information by often recording her lectures. She would listen to them again and follow up by typing her notes.

Another strategy was to listen to the lectures, then read the content to reinforce her knowledge of new information. She found the visual of videos helpful. Her suggestion was particularly helpful for Alaska Native graduate students who may have listened to the rich, Indigenous knowledge from elders or culture bearers.

Theodosia discussed the importance of graduate students understanding the term ‘flexibility.’ She stated, “Graduate students have to deal with a lot of -- or have to learn to be very flexible in their learning just because of the different styles of so many of the instructors and professors.” Her advice to Alaska Native graduate students is to be aware of the cognitive differences of a graduate program verses an undergraduate degree. She discussed the analytical

thinking that is required. She shared that students need to prepare for an education that is not just regurgitating facts and memorizing them to put on a paper exam. The graduate process involves analytical thinking with many different professors who all teach differently.

Theodosia has a large number of contacts and support networks not only in Alaska, but also with Indigenous communities in other countries. She completed her PhD in cross-cultural studies with a few other Alaska Native students at an institution in Alaska. She was part of the first clusters of Alaska Natives that attained a PhD at an Alaskan institution in the Indigenous Studies Program. She is now a tenured professor at another university in Alaska. Her past participation and current involvement in Fulbright scholarship and fellowships has increased networks for Alaska Native students, and she continues to work with those programs. As her mentors have done, Theodosia encourages Alaska Native PhD students to take advantage of scholarship and overseas opportunities to gain a broader perspective of issues and topics related to Indigenous knowledge systems. She collaborates and partner-teaches with Indigenous professors in other states and countries. She contributes to editing and publishing Alaska Native education material. Theodosia strives to increase the critical mass of Alaska Native doctoral students in the state and maintains her quest to learn more relating to her culture and language.

#### **6.1.6 Johnny's experience: Learning to just say "no" on the journey**

Johnny, an Aleut male, was born and raised in a rural Southwestern Alaskan community until third grade. His family moved to the West coast, but they would continue to spend every summer in his fishing village. His father was from Utah and Ohio. Johnny's great grandparents were very young when they migrated to the village, and he believes his great grandfather was originally from Nunivak Island. His great-grandmother was believed to be from the [city] side of



the peninsula. He loved spending summers in Alaska when his family all returned for commercial fishing.

Johnny reflected on his path to pursue his PhD. He always knew he wanted to attain a PhD or MD degree. It was “a given” that he would go to college, as his parents expected it. He attended a university in Alaska for his undergraduate degree in social work. He did not have a social group of Alaska Native peers in his degree program. The first time he had a close group of Native friends was in his social work graduate degree program at a university in the Midwest region of the United States.

Johnny had a story regarding how he reconnected with his Alaska Native roots. This segment of his journey helped him overcome a challenge he had regarding self-identity. He stated:

The reason I went back to this university to get my doctoral degree is because I felt this disconnect between who I was as a Native person and who I wanted to be as a scholar. I thought it would be a quick fix going back to Alaska, surrounding myself in the culture, reconnecting with my heritage and learning from my elders, that it would fix everything. But it did not. I still suffered from this identity crisis, I guess you would call it, where I did not feel like I fit in anywhere and I was only doing it to improve my communities without acquiring the Native knowledge that would also contribute to my identity as a Native man. That resolved itself once I started doing my fieldwork, but it was to think about what influenced my decision...I wanted to work with Native elders to improve their health and well-being in Bristol Bay.

His process was not only educational, but it helped him heal and give back to the community with which he was working.

A challenge Johnny encountered during his doctoral research was gaining the trust of Alaska Native elder participants. He was able to overcome this challenge and explained how he did it:

Having to go through the fieldwork process and the IRB to get approval to work in my home region was eye-opening because they did not trust me right away because I wasn't raised there full-time. I tried to use the names of people my parents and other relatives knew. They knew who my great grandparents and grandparents were. It was time consuming, and at times frustrating, to go through that whole process and getting them to support my research and realize that I was there because I wanted to do valuable work and give back to the communities.

He expressed that the research and data gathering process gave him stronger connections to people in his region than he had growing up in his community, as well as a strong understanding of his culture. What he believed were family traits or behaviors were also found in others in the communities he visited, and he realized his family did possess cultural practices found in the region. He also gained elder support and developed relationships through his research process that still exist to this date. His elders were instrumental in supporting and helping him realize his research was important and had value beyond a dissertation. He stated, "My elders were really important. I had a couple, I still work with them and talk to them once or twice a week it seems like, elder mentors in [city] that I would go to, talk to about why am I learning this stuff."

Johnny had supportive parents, but they lived far away. Other support networks in place were from his friends and his committee chair. He said they kept his focus, which balanced his Indigenous and westernized perspectives. Although he had some doubts and challenges with how

he collected his data, he was focused on his research and grounded with his belief systems. He managed to make time for his personal, social life with some healthy social stress relievers during his rigorous academic journey. He commented:

In terms of support to get through the actual PhD program, it would be the friends I made in my doctoral program and the friends I have had in [city] for years and years. Those friends knew when I was having a bad day. They could tell something was off or I was getting frustrated. They would be the ones that would say, “Okay, we need to take a break and go watch a movie or do something else.”

He has known his close friends for a long time and greatly valued their support.

Johnny had some advice and strategies for Alaska Native graduate students, which would be helpful with prioritizing their graduate coursework and social time. He stated:

Your studies and research related activities come first and that is challenging when you have competing demands from committee members, friends, family, loved ones, and extracurricular activities. A second piece of advice is knowing who to say ‘no’ to and who to say ‘yes’ to because I’ve said ‘no’ to the wrong people before.

Putting studies ahead of important people in one’s research project can potentially have an effect on one’s research relationships or data when working with community elders and culture bearers. This advice also relates to relationships with others at the University and into one’s professional work.

Another effective strategy for him was setting deadlines to keep on track and to set the deadlines with one’s research work during the writing phase as soon as possible. Johnny also stated, “Setting deadlines helps you stay on track to get things completed as soon as you receive them, but also protect your time and set boundaries for self-care.” Johnny mentioned a strategy

of taking time to go for walks. He greatly enjoyed the thinking time of his walks, clearing his head, enjoying the outdoors, and clearing the mind to re-focus for the rest of the day. An important point he made was it was very helpful to just be working on the dissertation and not working at a job. A last piece of advice he emphasized was stated as follows:

Make sure you do stuff that is fun. Do not overwhelm yourself. Think about what you are going to work on today. Do not worry about what has to be done at the end of it...Laughing is a huge one...surround yourself with friend support and those who love to laugh with you. It's nice to surround yourself with friends who challenge you academically and interact with you during your studies but having those who let you be goofy and laugh like children is key to happiness and balance.

He stated he recently gave this same research advice to one of his students. Lastly, he mentioned he had an online writing group during his dissertation phase. It helped keep him accountable, as he wrote every day.

After completing his master's degree at a Midwestern university, Johnny came back to Alaska to complete his PhD in cross cultural community psychology, with a research focus on Alaska Native elders. His PhD has given him opportunities. Johnny worked as a tenure-track research professor at a large urban Northwest university, but he discussed his desire to "come home" to Alaska. He now has a new position as a tenure-track faculty member at one of Alaska's universities. His hiring was an important step towards increasing numbers of Alaska Native faculty members and building the capacity of Alaska Native PhDs.

### **6.1.7 Lloyd's experience: Breaking the stereotypes—reservation upbringing and learning disability? No problem!**

Lloyd, a male of Tsimshian, Tlingit and Yup'ik decent, had a tenuous graduate journey. He grew up in a very small island community in Southeast Alaska. Following high school graduation, he moved to the East Coast to attend a private Christian college.

Lloyd discovered he had some academic challenges while in his undergraduate program. He took five and a half years to earn his bachelor's degree because he wanted to be better prepared when he graduated. His college support networks wanted to get him tested for a learning disability. He stated he thinks he may likely have a disability. He chose not to get the official testing since he was busy and moving forward with his degree programs. Following his undergraduate degree, he accepted a public school teaching job. He then pursued his master's degree and then a specialist degree that transitioned into his doctoral degree. The specialist and doctoral degree combination was a concentrated degree in school system leadership.

Despite his academic challenges, he persevered with the help of his wife and her family, advisors, professors, and church members. His church congregation would assist them with babysitting. His wife, work colleagues, and an editor helped with editing his work.

Lloyd was quite motivated as he moved along the postsecondary continuum. Even though he was from the small reservation community, he stated, "I wanted to show our people that we do have the ability to go above and beyond the stereotypes that we have been labeled with over the years."

He also stated he was motivated by what his Tsimshian ancestors had done and wanted to follow suit. He shared:

My great-grandparents were part of the founding members of the local Indian community. And I know a lot of people get upset with the colonization of our tribal people, but one thing I'm always proud of in saying that I'm from [my community] is knowing that our people were not forced into becoming colonized. It was something they chose to do, something they wanted to do. And with that in mind, that always made me want to continue on to show -- you know, just to continue on with that same driving force that they had to pick up and move entire families and separate from their biological brothers and sisters, in many cases, to provide a new way of life for their families. That was part of my driving force in obtaining my doctoral degree.

He did just that, as he uprooted and settled on the East Coast, yet he has high respect for his cultural values and his homeland. He is living in rural Appalachia, where his wife is from. They supported each other throughout their entire postsecondary education programs, from their bachelor's, master's, and specialist's degrees, on to their doctoral degrees. The two had a challenging road, as they were both graduate students and raising their children at the same time.

Lloyd's doctoral program was a blended learning program, primarily online. The online program often required visual presentations such as Skype presentations and PowerPoint assignments. He felt this instructional model aligned well with his visual learning style. Despite numerous barriers, Lloyd had many sources of success throughout his postsecondary journey. He credits part of his success to a small school size in parts of his program, where he received the support he needed to finish. He had an editor during his dissertation, which was an enormous help.

Lloyd's advice to Alaska Native graduate students is to not let one's PhD work run their life. He said it was very much a part of who he was, but it did not control everything. He was still

able to be a family man. He would stay up late to work on his papers. Another piece of advice he gave was to have an editor. Lloyd stated his biggest strategy was having an editor for his dissertation. He said having a dissertation committee that was carefully chosen was also vital to his successful completion of his terminal degree program. He stated, “When people are picking out their dissertation teams, they need to make sure they are going to be people who are truly going to support them during their process.”

Lloyd had another pertinent statement for Alaska Native graduate students:

We need to show our Native people or anybody who lives in rural Alaska how education is the only way we’re going to survive as a people, that it is possible for our own people to go out and become our medical doctors, to become our dentists, become our superintendents at schools. We depend so much on the outside. We need to show that we can be self-sustainable. The only way we are ever going to do that is have people who are PhDs and EdDs to go back into our communities and show that it is possible.

He no longer lives in Alaska, but he is very much connected to his home community, his culture, and ‘giving back’ to his community and people. He enjoys teaching in the rural community he lives in, with his wife’s family nearby.

Lloyd has defied many odds, attaining his terminal degree at an East Coast university in the field of school system leadership. He stated he realizes he can pursue administrative school jobs with his degree when he is ready to embrace those opportunities.

#### **6.1.8 Rudolph’s experience: Non-traditional late start—the “kid in a candy store” finishes strong**

Rudolph, an Alutiiq male, was born and raised on Alaska’s largest Southwest island of [city]. He later moved to [city] for school. He attended and graduated from an alternative high

school at 20 years old. He had a later start than many, beginning college as a nontraditional student at 26 years old. Despite his long journey, Rudolph was focused as he moved toward his graduate degrees. He graduated with a triple major for his undergraduate degree from a well-established, large West Coast public institution. He earned an undergraduate degree in English, art, and urban planning. He went to graduate school but took a brief break before graduate school. He then changed majors. He eventually graduated with his master's degree in English. His motivation and several supports were his driving forces.

Rudolph has a passion for literature, spending a great amount of time reading and writing. He read frequently as a child. He stated graduate school was a nice fit for his learning preferences, with smaller class sizes. He commented on one graduate school task: "Basically, here's a book. Go read it and we can talk about it." He responded very well to that, stating, "That's candy for me, so I really loved that." Rudolph shared his motivation by stating, "What motivated me is, you know, I like reading and I like learning. I think it's really hard to get around that in a PhD program."

Rudolph read the book, "Going Native", which influenced his pursuit of a PhD. He met the Yup'ik professor who authored the book, and she served as a key inspiration and mentor for him throughout his PhD journey. He said he never would have made it through graduate school without people looking out for him, including his professors and mentors from Alaska and the colleges where he attended school.

Rudolph mentioned that he had difficult times during graduate school and having an external support network was important. He was married during his graduate program and had a solid circle of friends outside of his program. He stated his funding from his Native regional



corporation along with his tribal organization were vital to his PhD journey. He reiterated this by stating, “Nothing is as supportive as funding.”.

He shared some advice for Alaska Native graduate students. He stated, “Get the project done. The project is what is important in a PhD program. Everything else will work itself out, but I think the most important thing is finish that project and file it.” He concluded his wise advice to current and future students, stating there will be time for other things, but finishing is the key.

Another area of support Rudolph wanted to share with Alaska Native students is the importance of funding for graduate school. He mentioned as graduate students’ projects become clear, they may have more funding opportunities. He said receiving funding also encourages a student to do better work. An important point he stated is that funding has a timeline. He stated:

Whether it is a fellowship or a scholarship or whatever it is, that is really a way to say, “We’re going to support you and also you need to have the project done in this amount of time.” So that’s a very pragmatic answer, but I have always -- I have been motivated to always get it done. Those things have really been helpful.

He mentioned if a student has a scholarship or grant funds, it would be on the back of one’s mind to get it finished in a timely manner.

Rudolph enjoys research writing and utilizes blogs as an effective mode to engage his college students and an Indigenous audience from other locations. He values education and sits on the educational foundation for his Native corporation. Rudolph shares his belief of Alaska Native scholarship. He commented:

I think Alaska Natives value education in a way that is distinct from non Natives. I think education is -- knowledge is in many ways highly valued. I think that it is hard -- if we are a tribal people, we are 40% of all tribes in the nation. And then of course our quasi-

sovereign corporations, over 200 of those. All of our sovereign entities are just about over half of the nation's tribes and corporations, right? So I felt that there was a real need for Alaska Natives to be doing scholarship because, you know, it was such a real opportunity to contribute something.

Rudolph graduated with a PhD in comparative ethnic studies from a West Coast university. He also completed a post-doctoral program at Midwest university. He currently works as a tenure-track professor at a Central West university. He shared how his doctoral program has helped him do what he enjoys. He stated:

...Just endless opportunities. Everything. Writing, I enjoy writing and I enjoy research, and the PhD has really given me a path into being able to do that for a living...It has given me more power to choose what I want to do. You know...more mobility and flexibility in my career choices.

Rudolph has a positive attitude and contributes a great deal to Alaska Native education by creating study groups, Alaska Native/American Indian blogs, highlights work by Alaska Natives and American Indians with his blogs, and he is involved with an Alaskan corporation educational scholarship committee, even from afar.

#### **6.1.9 William's experience: "Work hard, strive, and succeed," while working three jobs, raising a family, and earning a science PhD**

William, a Tlingit male, born and raised in a Northwest city in the lower 48. He was one of the very first Alaska Native PhD graduates. As a young student, his interests were in sciences and mathematics. Although he was not born in Alaska, he had close roots from Alaska, with his mother being born in a small, coastal Southeast Alaska Native community. He spent time in Alaska and a majority of his career involved advocating for Alaska and 'giving back' to

Indigenous people through his political career, at the national and international levels. He currently serves on international committees relating to marine mammal and oceanic issues and has held various national presidentially appointed roles in his fields. William spent his lifetime in executive level political leadership roles, in the fields of marine mammals and ocean research.

His academic journey was arduous, but he was prepared for the challenge, as he heeded his Tlingit mother's advice to "work hard, strive, and succeed." His mother set the bar high and strongly supported him. He had a young family with a child and a supportive wife. His wife gave him the space and time he needed to write. William managed to complete his doctoral program in a timely manner. He modeled hard work, taking on a full course load at his university while raising a family and working three jobs.

During this era of the late 60's and early 70's, there were not many mentoring or other support programs in place. If any did exist, they were informal. He had a complex degree path, focusing on fisheries and biostatistics. He had two internationally renowned professors in particular who greatly helped him. He commented, "I couldn't have done it without the jobs that the professors provided and the support they provided."

Military veteran financial support contributed to his PhD attainment. In the late 60's, he served in the army between degrees. William was selected as the chair of a special Department of Commerce conference honoring veterans on a national scale. During his personal comment speech, he stated he would not have been on that stage without the support of some veterans funding during his doctoral journey.

William discussed the importance of relationships he developed in college and the importance of teamwork, which was new to him. He gave the example of working on his dissertation with another fellow who was an economist. He was a biologist and between their

two different personality types and fields, they learned to work together to get their separate dissertation tasks completed. He stated, “So I started out as a traditionalist guy working as an individual and ended up being someone who believed in teamwork.” Peers can be potential bosses down the road. He had a fellow classmate who was a peer mentor that later employed him. That particular job was a significant moment that initiated his lifelong career and contributions in marine fisheries, as well as his impact with work in other national and international organizations. His relationships with his colleagues and mentors influenced his path. An important message he has for Alaska Native graduates is to work on relationships and have mentors, as they can be important contacts in your future. He affirmed:

While in the university, you can make contacts who prove to be important, giving you...so that’s part of what people do now naturally, the opportunity to form networks. And this was not formally known back then, but meeting that guy and meeting some other people, I did form contacts that I could use in future years and who were very helpful.

Another suggestion to students was to “keep your eyes on the goal. Put your energies in the things that will probably profit you.” He shared another piece of important advice for graduate students regarding communication with their audiences:

I’ve already mentioned teamwork, but there’s another one that is especially important in the world I work in, just trying to communicate science to stakeholders in various issues... knock off the buzzwords and the acronyms and learn to pitch their story. That is, what you need to do is tell a story, pitch your story at the right level to the people you are trying to influence. That is a difficult skill. I do not think that schools emphasize that enough.

William stresses the importance of giving advice to graduate students about having clear communication with one's audience, particularly in science fields with many acronyms and scientific terminology. Know one's audience. This coincides with the teamwork concept he brought up, and both are critical in building networks in graduate school and beyond, which he discussed.

William attained his master's degrees in the mid 60's and his PhD in the early 70's from a large university in the Northwest. William had many doors open soon after he graduated. During his interview he stated more than once, "It was granting the keys to the kingdom." He went into further detail saying, "Everything opened up after that. I had the training and the background. I had made some contacts. It was good training, good contacts. Jobs came with that." Although retired in his field, he continues to advocate for more Alaska Native and America Indian students furthering their education in science fields. He is still actively involved with international issues and is highly respected in his field.

#### **6.1.10 Irene's experience: Finding a perfect match with the college and degree and a "second lease on life"**

Irene, a Tlingit female, was born and raised in [city], Alaska. Her father was a fluent Tlingit speaker from inland Canada. Irene's mother was from the Midwest and had values that both differed and complemented her husband's values. Both of Irene's parents were supportive and pushed her and her siblings. Irene attended a large school district and recalls having only one Alaska Native educator, Dr. Oscar Kawagley, in her K-12 experience. Irene attended an Alaska university before moving south to finish her undergraduate degree at a small, private West Coast liberal arts college. Her passion was classical and world music, as well as Alaska Native music. She went back to her home after completing her undergraduate degree and kept busy working for

her regional Native corporation, tutoring music students, and playing music in the local city symphony. She plays several instruments, including piano, violin, and viola.

At 28 years old, Irene decided to attend graduate school at a West Coast university. She was accepted on a probationary status into a graduate music program due to her GPA not being at the level they would like. The graduate global music program ended up being a perfect fit for her, and she was able to make a smooth transition into her doctoral program. Despite being a large university in an urban city, the ethnomusicology program was small and students and professors shared the same educational passion. She was motivated and inspired with her new path. She spoke passionately about her program and especially her professors. She stated:

My college was my second lease on life. It gave me everything: a great education, fantastic educational experiences, and I learned so much. I learned how to write. I learned how to research. I learned how to teach, at least initially. I had fantastic role models that were doing research with Indigenous or non-Western communities, so I learned before even these ideas of decolonizing methodologies came out in the 90's. My college was doing this in the 80's because most all of their work was with Indigenous communities.

Irene had several Indigenous professors with world music expertise and background, ranging from both American Indian tribes and from other countries. She excelled with her professors. Some of her professors served as advisors too. She loved the fact that she was at a renowned university and immediately upon arrival to their program, students were instructed to address the faculty members by their first name rather than the title "Doctor." The professors clearly told them, "You are our peers. You are our colleagues. We have a collegial atmosphere. We're on a first name basis." She was shocked at that methodology at such a prestigious university.

Irene conducted research as an assistant to her mentor professor. She also worked and received fellowships to help pay for her postsecondary education. Aside from sharing her motivation and helpful support networks in graduate school, she shared an important piece of advice regarding academic support for Alaska Native graduate students:

I did not know what I was doing. I was very young, you know, but I learned so much and I was mentored beautifully. I think one of the things, as we all learn from kind of somewhat of an Indigenous household, is that we learn how to listen and we learn how to absorb. And we also -- this is something I learned very young, as we all do as young people in pretty much Native households, is that when we don't know what is really going on, you just observe. And so there's many times you say, "I did not know what was going on," but I just sat back and I observed just to kind of get the tone. Of course, when you do that, it just keeps you from making mistakes and you learn. That is a very good learning tool that I think no one recognizes. That aided me a lot at my college.

She related this advice to being new to a graduate program without the experiences of research, writing, conducting fieldwork, and conducting library research.

Another important piece of advice Irene offered for current and future Alaska Native graduate students was to make sure the program is well suited for them. She commented:

I think part of the success of being in a graduate program is being with professors that you want to learn from or have something that you are passionate about, that what you are learning is something that you love and the coursework or the parameters of that program you are really comfortable with. You can be miserable if you are not in the right graduate program.

Irene emphasized finding the perfect match for your degree field. She had the perfect balance of supportive faculty, peers in her field, and financial supports with working at her college. Besides having all of the solid supports, she shared specific ways her parents helped her.

Her father aided her greatly with her research, which had a strong cultural component. She felt a bit uncomfortable gathering the data she needed for her research on her own, as she was young and shy. Her father would go with her when she conducted her research fieldwork. He was able to speak his Tlingit language fluently. She had ‘inside advantages’ with Native elders, with whom she maintained respectful relationships beyond her research. They embraced her research work at the time and allowed her full access to their Indigenous knowledge library.

Irene shared a beautiful story of her post-defense moments with her father’s presence. She flew him down to her college so he could watch his favorite professional hockey team compete in her college city. Simultaneously, she was preparing her thesis defense. She emotionally spoke:

I got my master’s degree and my dad was actually there when I had to do my master’s defense, my thesis defense. He was waiting in my TA office as I was doing my defense. I came out and, you know, of course they congratulate you, say, “Everything’s fine. You got your master’s degree.” All my dad said was, “Did you pass?” And I said, “Yes, I did.” I might start crying. He grabbed my hands and he kissed my hands. That was very special and it was not planned that he would be there, but that was so cool that he visited me.

Irene’s supportive mother, a physical therapist, valued education as well. Lastly, her elder supports in Alaska were vital. She still maintains close friendships with them today.



Irene is currently a professor at an Alaskan university. She is also a director of an Alaska Native Studies program. She has been a lead editor and author of Alaska Native education materials. Alaska is fortunate to have her back in her home state after a ten-year successful career at a Southwest university. She is a leader at the Alaska universities and graciously collaborates with other campuses to increase Alaska Native student success. Ethnomusicology was her doctoral path, but she contributes a great deal more to Alaska Native postsecondary education and Alaska Natives.

## **6.2 Summary and Analysis of Alaska Native PhD Interview Participants' Journeys to Their PhD and Their Advice to Alaska Native Graduates and Universities**

This chapter has presented ten interview participants' personal accounts of their educational path to their PhD degrees. Patterns do exist with the Alaska Native PhD graduates. The interview participants' responses reveal several common themes with the survey participants. The most consistent finding across the groups was that their motivation stemmed from their passion for their particular doctoral degree field. The survey and interview participants shared how they "gave back" and the joy they received from using their degree in the work world. Both data groups shared poignant memories of their academic endeavor and expressed social, academic, and financial supports that made their PhD attainment possible.

Both participant research groups of Alaska Native PhDs revealed how they overcame their individual challenges in the pursuit of their terminal degree programs. While this chapter focused on each interview participant providing expert advice and encouragement to aspiring Alaska Native graduate students, Chapter Seven will share the survey participants' advice and suggestions for Alaska Native graduate students.

One male and female participant each stated, “I was like a kid in a candy store.” Several commented explicitly on this passion for their academic field, and particularly the readings and research. As mentioned in Fox’s 2008 study, she stated American Indian women faculty, she stated the Native faculty shared their feelings of being “tremendously rewarded by teaching, mentoring....especially prizing their roles of giving back to their home communities and tribal nations.” (Brayboy et al., 2012, p. 95). For many Alaska Native PhD graduates, “giving back” or giving to the community, was an important value to them, including upon completion of their terminal degree.

Alaska Native PhD graduates attained a doctoral degree in their field of interest or “passion”, which gave them purpose, particularly when they would share their knowledge with others. For almost all of the participants, their passion for their degree was apparent with how they utilized their degree and/or how it benefitted them in their profession. Over the past century, there has been a decline in ‘giving back’ in Indigenous communities with subsistence living due to the expense, time, and accessibility of hunting and gathering. Having an education, hence a “purpose within a particular field of knowledge,” allows for a form of “giving back” to one’s community and people, similar to a resource. Examples of this would be many of the Alaska Native university professors teaching in their degree field and spending time with their students, particularly Indigenous students.

Several interview participants and survey participants expressed the enjoyment of research and writing. This was reinforced by survey comments Alaska Native PhDs made regarding the enjoyment they get from teaching at a university. This is also expressed when they shared how fortunate they felt to have a postsecondary position. Another example of great joy in their degree field was examples of some participants working in a STEM field, with researching

and sharing knowledge with other scientists and Indigenous people in the community, as expressed in the surveys and by an interview participant.

Another consistent finding among the interview participants was the significance of their support networks during their journey. Several Alaska Native PhD graduates had similar experiences to Rogers' (2006) findings, which expressed the importance of strong communication networks and a supportive network within the university as important factors leading to success. This typically consisted of significant others, professors, advisors, and peers. Each of these participants felt the human support factor was a critical aspect that assisted in their program completion. The parental support resonated much more with the interview participants. Ninety percent of the interview participants also discussed the critical support they received from their professors, which was not always the case with the survey participants as a whole. Eighty percent of the interview participants had very strong parental or guardian support. In a few cases, it was quite the opposite with some survey participants. Mentors and/or peers played a critical supportive role for half of the interview participants. Half of the interview participants stated how important partner or spousal support was. A few of the interview participants discussed the importance of their elder support too. Having a support network or even better, a combination of support networks was a vital piece of successful PhD degree attainment for most Alaska Native PhD graduates.

Some of the participants discussed the importance of financial support while attending graduate school. Rogers (2006) found financial resources to be fundamental to PhD attainment with her research study's population of African American women. Several participants in my study felt this was paramount during their PhD journey. An interview participant made the

comment that this project's research questions should have placed more emphasis on the importance of the financial support during their doctoral programs.

Interviewees spoke to the importance of students understanding in advance the challenges and strategies of financing their degree program. Several considered this a great obstacle, as they had to maintain steady employment while working on their graduate studies. One graduate discussed his funding sources during his PhD journey:

I had to work in the summers to rather make ends meet. I was washing dishes as a graduate student at my college. I would come up here and work for [Native corporation] and I worked at [Mining company] a couple summers because, again, it paid \$1,000 a week. Other people (at my college) were able to work on an article or work on a chapter. I think Native students or poor students for whatever reasons do not have these multiple layers of support that are required for success. Again, it was easier to tread water than take risks.

Charlie's graduate university had a reputation for having strong donor funding support to finance a range of scholarships. He said it was easier to coast in college for several years. He could be a student with a scholarship and work as a teacher's assistant (TA) for \$13,000 per year. It was less of a challenge than graduating and having the task of finding a job. His college was incredibly expensive. His Native corporation scholarship did not pay nearly as much as the numerous scholarships he received from his graduate university.

Findings from the Brayboy et al. (2012) study of American Indian graduates have some similarities with my findings relating to Alaska Native PhD graduates. Two key areas that were similar to Brayboy et al. related to the significance of Alaska Native PhD graduates being resilient and self-motivated. Each interview participant shared some level of resilience. They also

shared effective strategies that motivated them or help them be successful in their studies.

Tenacity, or having persistence and determination, was another well-noted trait articulated in the data collected from the ten interviews and fifty-nine survey responses.

It was quite apparent in the findings that tenacity and resilience leading to degree completion were paramount for the Alaska Native PhDs. A number of survey and interview questions related to the topic of motivation. Interview participants shared not only wise advice, but personal journeys with their challenges along the way. The challenges the participants encountered showcased the resilience many of them experienced during their PhD journey. Chapter Seven will present the findings of interview and survey participants' advice and strategies for aspiring Alaska Native graduate students and universities seeking to attract and graduate Alaska Native graduate students.

## **Chapter Seven: Advice and Recommendations for Future Students and Universities**

### **Seeking to Attract and Graduate Alaska Native Graduate Students**

Those who have gone before can be wonderful advisors and can share short cuts and help. Find a core support group of Native and non Native students who can provide all forms of support. It is also important to engage in self-care and activities that are of personal interest to you and keep you grounded.

~Alaska Native PhD participant

The statement above captures some significant themes advising students to advocate for support networks while working on their graduate degree as well as seek a healthy balance of life and activities outside of the coursework. Personal wellness areas addressed in this statement include physical, mental, and social well-being while a scholar is on the rigorous path to attain a PhD degree.

In this last chapter, Alaska Native PhD participants shared their thoughts on the importance of supporting, pushing, and encouraging Alaska Native students at an early age through the end of their secondary education. As presented, most challenges for Alaska Native PhD graduates occurred unexpectedly and outside of the university while pursuing their PhD degree. In this final chapter, survey participants share ways to overcome those major barriers with many suggestions. A compelling part of the survey data was the large number of comments Alaska Native PhD graduates had regarding suggestions to Alaska Native aspiring graduate students seeking to complete a graduate or doctoral degree. As a result of the large volume of data, their recommendations were clustered into emerging themes. Finally, Alaska Native PhDs also had many recommendations to universities seeking to increase, retain, and graduate Alaska

Native graduate and PhD students, which are also shown as themes that have emerged. The recommendations would also be of interest to Native organizations seeking to support more Alaska Native graduate students.

### **7.1 Overcoming Unique Challenges and Barriers: Advice to Aspiring and Current Alaska Native Graduate Students**

Geography was a principal challenge unique to Alaska Native scholars. Several factors relating to geography were presented in Chapter Five relating to time and place to get to the colleges, degree options, expenses, and in many cases, the lack of cultural identity and connectedness.

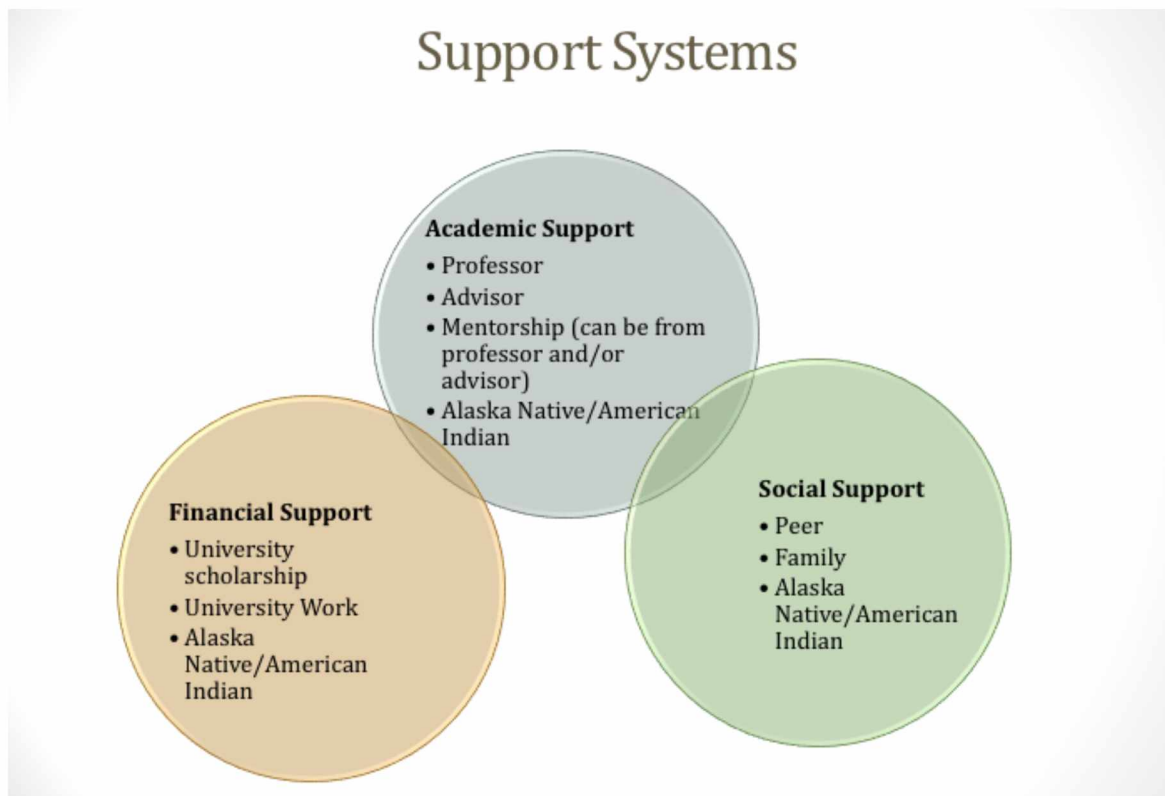
A way to address this geographical challenge may be to increase distance education doctoral programs or have more modified distance education PhD programs since 75% of the Alaska Native PhDs were from Alaska. An example of that would be the Antioch University model, where students meet face to face several times a year for a week or two. Another example to address the distance challenge would be University of Alaska Fairbanks' distance PhD program, where students have optional gatherings covering academic and social supports twice a year. Students also get advice on financial support at their biyearly meetings and have many ways to connect in class and with peers using technology. Mentorships with peers in PhD programs organically occurs as the student bond at their meetings and in their courses together.

There were a few other challenges Alaska Native PhDs encountered before their doctoral program. Some of those challenges were low expectations from teachers or counselors prior to college, lack of studying, low self-expectations of pursuing a degree beyond a bachelor's degree (and the stigma of being underachievers at the college level) and having low motivation in college prior to their doctoral programs. A solution to overcome these challenges is by having a

support system or a combination of support systems in place. Three main support systems emerged from the Alaska Native PhD survey responses.

### 7.1.1 Support systems

The main support systems recommended by Alaska Native PhD graduates were academic, financial, and social support networks. Figure 7.1 shows the support systems that emerged as a result of Alaska Native PhD graduates.



*Figure 7.1: Support systems for Alaska Native PhD graduates are broken into three main categories: Academic, financial, and social*

Figure 7.1 shows the academic support in the top center, with professor and advisors. Academic supports were shown as providing the most support from the survey and interview participants. Mentorships were vital to successful attainment as well. Mentors covered many people, including committee members, former professors, friends, and other Alaska Native PhD



graduates. A participant gave an example of an important mentor, stating, “One of my Professors hired a professional writer to mentor me and keep me on track to finish.”

Financial support was a critical component leading to PhD completion. This is shown by viewing the percentage of Alaska Native PhD students who had funding for a significant amount of their program, since most of the PhDs had a majority of their programs paid for with scholarships, fellowships, and work with their university or their Native entities. One participant disclosed the relevance of support from a Native agency she worked for:

I worked for my native non-profit for approximately five years before pursuing my PhD and through those experiences; I was connected to the culture and received a lot of financial and "cheering me on" type of support. I also reached out to two external mentors in the Native community whom I consulted with regularly throughout my training who also participated in a significant part of my dissertation process.

Even though the Native organizations often did not contribute a huge percentage, what they did contribute was important. They are extremely proud of their tribal members who have attained a PhD degree.

If universities want to increase, retain, and graduate Alaska Native students and graduate students, universities and potentially corporations should provide some financial support as well, as the data showed very little came from Native corporations and most students were full time students with 75%-100% of their PhD program funded.

The third main source of support was social supports. Many participants discussed the importance of their family and peer supports. Peer supports sometimes included their Alaska Native/American Indian support groups too. More recently, social networks and social media are serving as an important source of support for some of the latest PhD graduates, especially if they

have a distance education program. An example of social media as a support form is stated, “Social media use was a part of my professional development as scholars in my field. We use social media regularly.” Distance graduate programs are becoming more popular so this form of social support will undoubtedly increase.

## **7.2 Alaska Native PhD’s Thoughts: Support, Advocacy, and Success from Preschool to College for Alaska Native Students**

Having more Alaska Native leaders involved in the development of educational curriculums and assessments can be a proactive measure to increase performance of Alaska Native youth. Increasing the number of Alaska Native PhDs would benefit all age levels of Alaska Native students and school programs. For example, Alaska Native PhDs can inform Preschool to 12<sup>th</sup> grade policy and develop pedagogically and culturally appropriate curriculum by providing leadership and oversight in various school settings. Some of these PhDs will be teaching pre-service teachers at colleges. Some will be making decisions as committee board members in programs in education. Three examples give examples of the contributions PhDs give to K12 education in their communities.

The first example is a candidate who works as an assistant professor at {Alaska University}. He is a leader in his local Native youth dance group. Another example was an Alaska Native PhD student, who was a retired teacher/education grant administrator and a site council member for her Alaskan community high school. She is also an assistant professor at the local college. The third example of a PhD contributing to K12 educational programs is a PhD student who is a community leader in a nonprofit group with education as one of their programs. She also served as a director in her Native organizations business sector. The program she works with is involved in K12 outreach.

Several of the current Alaska Native PhD graduates work at Alaska and lower 48 universities. The current PhD graduates organically serve as mentors for many of the current Alaska Native PhD students. They voluntarily provide support and guidance to the current Alaska Native and non-Native PhD students. Some of the mentor PhDs play vital roles in educational policies at the main educational institutions in Alaska. They are Alaska Native leaders in promoting publications and organizing conferences that support K12 and postsecondary Native education.

Alaska Native PhD graduates had numerous thoughts and ideas for improving academic performance of Alaska Native students from preschool to college. Some of the topics the PhDs addressed are: (a) setting high expectations; (b) the need for curricular change; and (c) increase advocacy and outreach to college bound students.

#### **7.2.1 High expectations and curriculum changes in K-12**

The most frequent recommendation from these scholars was the need for higher expectations among Native students and curriculum changes in the K-12 school system. Several Alaska Native PhDs expressed the need to push and motivate Alaska Native children as early as primary grades, increase the standards at the K-12 level with core subjects, increase graduation rates of Alaska Native students at all levels, and improve the overall academic standing of Alaska Native students. They suggested that universities could provide increased support and focus on K-12 education by having a stronger presence in schools with Alaska Native students. One idea was to increase the number of Alaska Native teacher applicants in universities. It was suggested that there be a focus on career and goal setting with Alaska Native students too. It was shared the most effective efforts would be improving performance in elementary and high

school, as there are not enough qualified Alaska Native applicants. One participant suggested the following for the key to growing successful PhDs:

(1) Internships and early mentorship (K-12 and college) that really show what it means to be a scientist in a particular field; (2) Honest discussions about job prospects and salaries; (3) Support to testing high on the Graduate Record Exam

Many Alaska Native PhDs had something to share in this section. A message that resonated was have a clear, intentional, and rigorous academic pathway for Alaska Native students, starting in kindergarten. Some suggested having Native languages be a part of the program. Several PhDs shared the need to support students across the grade levels with various supports in all content areas. It was mentioned several times to motivate students when they are young and have role model Alaska Natives, with degrees, go into the classrooms and talk to them about achieving their goals. They need to know what opportunities are out there for them. They discuss parental involvement and a good learning environment. They also mentioned the need for giving students the confidence and the desire to set educational and career goals at a young age.

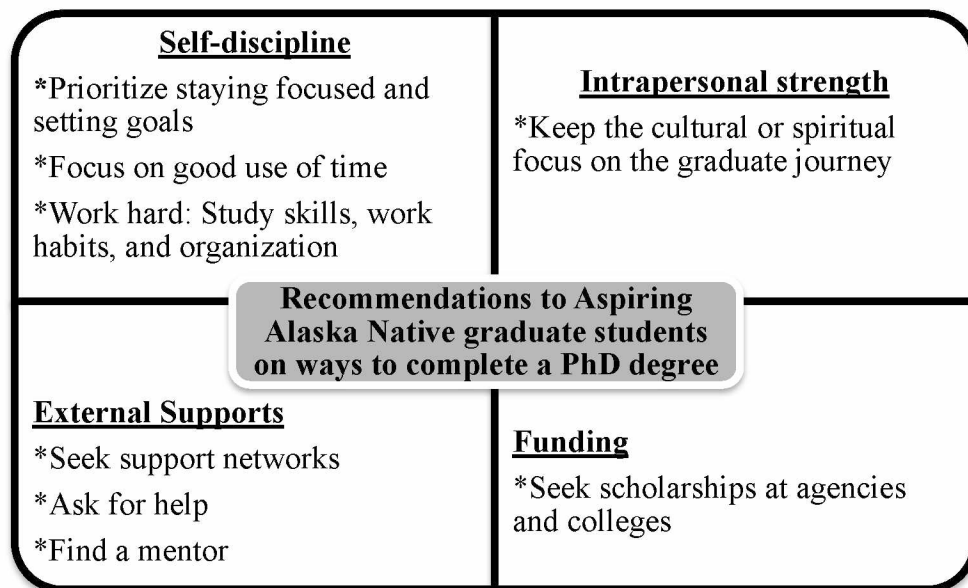
#### **7.2.2 Increase advocacy and outreach to college bound students**

Several Alaska Native PhDs advised an increase in outreach and advocacy for future Alaska Native college bound and PhD students. Suggestions from the participants included a personal invitation to a graduate program, as a PhD graduate to advocate for the importance of the research field by going to schools and institutions and being an example. There is a need for grass roots outreach in the communities and universities to get Alaska Native students interested and motivated to pursue college for undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees. There needs to be more of an effort in the K-12 level to inspire and motivate Alaska Native students with the

importance of higher education. Education is opportunity and that message needs to be broadcast in all Alaskan communities.

### **7.3 Advice to Graduate Students on Ways to Complete a PhD Degree**

A pattern that emerged in the findings was a significant percentage of PhD graduates gave advice to Alaska Native graduate students on how to successfully complete their doctoral program. Alaska Native PhD completers had suggestions to share regarding how to address various challenges. Survey respondents' advice to Alaska Native PhD students on how to successfully complete a PhD degree emerged into four major themes with subcategories as nice recommendations. Figure 7.2 shows the four themes. The four categories of advice by area are: (a) self-discipline, (b) intrapersonal strength, (c) external supports, and (d) funding.



***Figure 7.2: Recommendations to aspiring Alaska Native graduate students seeking a graduate/PhD degree***

### **7.3.1 Recommendation One: Prioritize staying focused and setting goals**

Alaska Native PhD graduates shared advice to Alaska Native graduate students on the theme of self-discipline on their graduate journey. Some ways to do this are by prioritizing their graduate studies and staying focused with their coursework and dissertation writing. Some commented on the importance of immediately finding a dissertation topic, that is both useful to others and something one is passionate about. Several others suggested to “Just get it done. Do not make excuses or complain.” Another emphasis was to not allow other peoples’ opinions to hinder one from their educational goals, rather have that as a “driving force” to work harder. One meaningful comment was made to, “Hang on. If you cannot run or walk, crawl and keep going.” These examples reflect the important recommendation to keep at it and do not let any obstacle stand in the way.

Alaska Native PhD graduates advised current and aspiring Alaska Native graduate students to have a clear vision of what they want to do and also to look beyond their doctoral degree. The participants emphasized the importance of owning one’s work and knowing one’s own learning style to benefit their studying. It is vital to not get sidetracked and have outside influences, activities, or people with negative attitudes interfere with the PhD work. The PhDs mentioned to not get discouraged if the timeline gets extended and other things arise along the path. That was an important point, as several shared unforeseen challenges that hindered their progress. They persevered, but sometimes it took a bit longer than expected.

### **7.3.2 Recommendation Two: Focus on good use of time**

Focus is another category under the theme of self-discipline. A critical area of importance for PhD students is to be aware and focus on good use of their time while working on their PhD degree. PhDs discussed the importance of thoughtful planning regarding coursework

and writing the dissertation. They suggest not just focusing on the work but saying “no” when necessary and being selective about conferences and other commitments. Emphasis on self-motivation, particularly during the dissertation phase is vital. Participants stated the importance of prioritizing with use of calendars, timers, with many suggestions related to keeping regular scheduled course study and dissertation writing times. An excellent comment supporting this was made, but also mentioned the importance of making steps attainable. A participant stated, “Do not have high expectations of what to get done daily or each semester. The bigger the goal you make for yourself rather than small steps, the harder it is mentally.” Several comments by PhDs related to the use of the program Endnote for citing references. It is an application that assists with organization of references and proper citations in a thesis. One participant added the importance of not being afraid of rewriting.

Many of the Alaska Native PhD graduates had pragmatic advice to aspiring Alaska Native graduate students regarding time management and personal expectations, particularly relating to the amount of time that is involved with the coursework and writing in a rigorous PhD program.

### **7.3.3 Recommendation Three: Work hard: Study skills, work habits, and organization**

The first emerging theme, self-discipline, also requires solid work ethic and organization. Alaska Native PhDs share the importance of working hard with Alaska Native graduates. Alaska Native PhDs discussed the path would involve being dedicated, having endurance, being consistent with effort, and being persistent along the journey. PhD participants provided many specific examples relating to study skills, work habits, and organizational tips that helped them succeed in their graduate programs. Important skills for aspiring Alaska Native graduate

students include sharing ideas with a study group about note-taking style, taking notes on the reading in a style that would work with an annotated bibliography, and to start building the dissertation bibliography from the beginning of graduate coursework. Good work habits involved organizing days, week, and months, even at early stages of the graduate program. Along with the daily planning, checklists were deemed very helpful. As one PhD mentioned, “One foot in front of the other-- that momentum adds up.” Another important piece of advice was to keep up with exercise, as there is a great deal of sitting, particularly during the writing phase. Many PhD participants emphasized the importance of this particular goal. As one stated, “Planning and organization will be a major part of your success.”

#### **7.3.4 Recommendation Four: Keep the cultural or spiritual focus on the graduate journey**

Another theme regarding recommendations to aspiring Alaska Native graduate students was around intrapersonal strength. Several of the Indigenous scholars advised Alaska Native graduate students to draw from their intrapersonal strengths, as in their cultural or spiritual focus. Ways to accomplish this are to learn more about their culture and spirituality, make time for and seek cultural connections, and if possible, share their cultural worldview with their professors. Some recommendations were to also be willing to “Challenge the paradigms in place. Read Indigenous methodologists and try to incorporate their work into your thesis wherever possible.” Several expressed their spirituality was an important part that kept them grounded and supported. Keeping a cultural and/or spiritual focus can be an important support, particularly during challenging times along the journey.



### **7.3.5 Recommendation Five: Ask for help**

Another example of the external support theme for aspiring PhD students is suggesting the Alaska Native graduate students not be afraid to get help with academics or other questions throughout their program. One does not have to know everything and should not be too proud to ask for help. A participant stated the benefits of seeking help by stating, “It is not being weak. It is knowing your limits and figuring out how to not just work with them but to strengthen [your skills] so you get better.” An added benefit of getting to know one’s advisor is that it can open doors to other like-minded students in one’s program. One PhD discussed the importance of “breaking out of a ‘shy’ paradigm.” It is a positive move to get academic or social support from mentors, professors, and peers in a graduate program.

A comment regarding getting to know one’s professor is as follows:

Get to know your major professors during the academic portion of PhD work, or even before when in a master’s program. Catching on with one of them can lead to the source of your dissertation and the support to complete the study. That is, professors are always looking for a few good graduate students to provide the products that fulfill the grants that they have obtained.

The relationship of student to advisor or professor is also important to stay on track and make sure the degree is completed in a timely manner. Seeking help with these factors is important. Seeking support networks was also mentioned previously in this research paper.

Contrarily, it was mentioned to remove committee members who are not supportive or helpful. Some unsupportive examples shed light on the significance of having committee members who want their student to successfully complete their degree program.

### **7.3.6 Recommendation Six: Find a mentor**

One of the most significant patterns from the data collection was the high percentage of Alaska Native PhDs who provided advice to Alaska Native graduate students on the topic of mentorships. Besides academic support, there were many ways they helped these students on their PhD journeys.

Advice for seeking a mentor included making sure the mentor matches the graduate student's needs. It was important to many respondents to choose a mentor who the student admired, trusted, and respected. The mentor was also knowledgeable in the student's field of study. The mentor did not have to be limited to one person. It is important to note that some PhD graduates did not provide suggestions.

Survey results clearly show there was a small number of PhDs who did not believe mentorships and supports were pertinent to a program at the doctoral level. They felt it was more appropriate at the undergraduate level. Those sentiments occurred at several points in the comment section of the survey. One PhD graduate who did not see a need nor value in mentorships stated, "Doctoral students should not need such mentoring for themselves at this stage; rather, doctoral students should make time to mentor master's and bachelor's Native students."

The veteran scholars gave pragmatic mentoring advice with over 45 years of doctoral coursework and experience behind them. The themes involving mentorships between Alaska Native PhDs and their mentoring advice to Alaska Native graduate students included: (a) self-advocacy, (b) trustworthiness, (c) research, (d) risk taking, (e) self-confidence, (f) bravery, (g) follow-through, (h) intuitiveness, (i) gratitude, and (j) reciprocity of respect towards each other.

### **7.3.7 Recommendation Seven: Seek scholarships at agencies and colleges**

The last major theme is funding, which is likely the most important factor leading to PhD completion. The PhD graduates gave words of wisdom focusing on proactive measures requiring aspiring or current graduate students to seek funding on their own. The theme of seeking funds included some suggestions, such as paying close attention to funding opportunities. Some sources of potential funding include tuition waivers and scholarships at universities, and scholarships from Alaska's Native corporations. One PhD mentioned looking for fellowships, like the Ford Foundation, as it allows one to focus on academics and other aspects of being a university graduate student. Another recommendation regarding funding was to "live cheaply and work only if you have to," as the doctoral program is very demanding. Several Alaska Native PhDs felt Alaska's Native corporations should support PhD level scholarships more. They also suggested they provide more support to PhDs by working with each other to figure out how to accomplish this. It was also suggested that ANCSA organizations provide more mentorships and help with the effort to support more PhDs. Perhaps, alongside the Youth and Elders forum at Alaska Federation of Natives, they create an organized group to advocate more funding to Alaska Native PhD students. There is a need for more Indigenous research by Alaska Native people for Alaska Native people. Corporations do provide some funding, but a recommendation would also be to advocate for more funding at the graduate levels, as graduate programs are more expensive than undergraduate programs and students are most often committed at that level of their college path.

PhDs also stated it is vital to prepare oneself for an arduous journey of pure commitment. Aside from these four themes of recommendations to aspiring Alaska Native graduate students, several of the Alaska Native PhD graduates shared "tough love" type suggestions. More

specifically, the PhDs said it would be hard work and the Alaska Native graduate students should know what they are in for and prepare to take ownership for high personal expectations in their graduate program. One PhD participant stated there was more need than a survey to address the challenges experienced.

#### **7.4 Recommendations to Universities Seeking to Recruit and Retain Alaska Native Graduate Students**

There is a clear response to the research question, “Are there ‘lessons learned’ in terms of aiding university PhD programs in attracting and graduating Alaska Native students?” The participants’ suggestions emerged into three major themes with seven recommendations. This particular research inquiry has potential benefits for university administrators, faculty, staff, Native education organizations, tribes, and grant program recipients seeking to attract, support, and graduate Alaska Native graduate students and PhDs. As stated in the research, there were primary major barriers articulated by survey participants. Figure 7.3 displays the themes and categories of recommendations to universities seeking to attract and increase Alaska Native graduate students. Each of these recommendations will in turn be discussed.

## Recommendations to Universities and Institutions Seeking to Increase and Graduate Alaska Native Graduate Students

<u><b>Indigenous Spaces and Faces</b></u>	<u><b>Institution Support</b></u>	<u><b>Funds and Creativity</b></u>
R1: Indigenize the curriculum and academic spaces R2: Increase Alaska Native faculty at universities	R3: Provide Alaska Native/American Indian social support groups R4: Provide academic support R5: Provide mentorship support	R6: Support scholarships and/or internship opportunities R7: Think out of the box: Innovative ways universities can support Alaska Native graduate students

*Figure 7.3: Recommendations to Universities Seeking to Increase and Retain Alaska Native Graduate/PhD Students*

### **7.4.1 Recommendation One: Indigenize the curriculum and academic spaces, and increase Alaska Native faculty members**

The Alaska Native PhD participants recommend increasing the presence of Alaska Native faculty and content in courses relevant to Alaska Natives. One participant stated, “Shape and create Indigenous spaces for students (physical and intellectual). Provide coursework that engages diverse Indigenous perspectives on theory, methodology and PRAXIS. Provide a cohort experience for both on and off-site students.” This comment was an example of looking forward with distance education programs. Some curricular suggestions involved embedding Indigenous worldviews and language within the curriculum materials, and augmenting curriculum with relevant cultural student activities. One participant stated the following as it relates to the importance of Indigenous presence on a campus, “Cultural and spiritual life might not seem important for bottom-line metrics such as graduation rate, etc., but to attract, retain, and

providing access to this side of Native life is critical for seeing students through this process successfully.”

Cultural identity was woven into responses throughout the surveys and the personal interviews, not just located in responses for the few targeted, culturally themed questions. If cultural identity is a common or unique trait for most Alaska Native PhD graduates, as shown by the percentages in this study, then universities across the country should create or strengthen cultural programs-academically and socially. Perhaps working groups comprised of Indigenous students and other interested students, university staff, and faculty can explore successful programs and build programs at campuses. It can be as simple as creating study sessions and spaces for study. Participants emphasized the importance of working alone without distraction.

If university cultural programs are already in place, perhaps that information can be presented to other universities that do not have well-established programs. Cultural identity and connections may not be easy to develop at some institutions. As some participants mentioned, they were involved in groups or clubs with other ethnic groups since there may not have been many other Alaska Native students. Belonging to a culture club may be a pathway to success and a support for Alaska Native students that may want more. Perhaps if there are not any Alaska Native / American Indian groups they can seek clubs with other minority groups instead. Trujillo and Alston (2005) know the importance of cultural supports and language as they stated, “It would be safe to say that...Native language and culture promotes success in Indian students” (p. 13).

#### **7.4.2 Recommendation Two: Increase Alaska Native Faculty and Advisors**

An increase in Alaska Native faculty presence would benefit and motivate Alaska Native students at any level of their education. There has been an increase in Alaska Native faculty at

Alaska's universities in the past five years, and there are even more Alaska Native faculty that are not on a tenure track, but in a term or adjunct faculty positions. Recently, there are more Alaska Native faculty members at the major Alaska universities and they are teaching while working towards their PhD degree with the goal of changing from a term track professor position to a tenure track position.

Regarding out of state job openings, perhaps a network site can be developed so that Alaska Native PhDs have a place to look. Not all are on Facebook, so perhaps a location, like the Alaska Native Studies Council or Alaska Native Knowledge Network can have a clearinghouse or site for jobs available, inside and outside of Alaska for Alaska Native PhDs. Participants echo what Caulfield (2003) presented in his sabbatical paper, addressing the need to increase the number of Alaska Native faculty. Barnhardt and Kawagley (1998, 2005a, 2005b, 2010, 2011) have been driving forces behind the effort and Alaska Native PhDs; these influencers also mentioned the need to continue to increase Alaska Native PhD faculty. An issue that makes finding the exact numbers of Alaska Native faculty in Alaska's universities difficult is that the system of designating Alaska Native faculty is combined with American Indian faculty. The generated reports show Alaska Native/American Indian combined faculty numbers (<https://www.alaska.edu/swbir/ir/reports/ua-in-review/uar2015/UAR-2016-Final.pdf>). It also can be tricky with confidentiality if someone does not want to state his or her ethnicity publicly. A way to address the issue of ethnicity identification for faculty upon hire would be to list or query (specifically, Banner program-type search) for only Alaska Natives. That would allow for a more accurate query search on the number of Alaska Native faculty there are in the state.

A component of the recommendation to increase Alaska Native faculty would be to support and encourage non-tenure track faculty, as well as Alaska Native university support

staff, to pursue their PhD degree if they do not have one. A number of Alaska Native university employees have a bachelor's or master's degree, so giving them supports to pursue their doctoral degree would be advantageous. One PhD mentioned it was important to let graduate students know upfront that there are limited tenure-track professor positions, particularly in Alaska.

#### **7.4.3 Recommendation Three: Provide Alaska Native/American Indian social support groups**

Alaska Native scholars advise universities to create social support groups for Alaska Native graduate students. Some scholars also mentioned the importance of cohorts, where students can build relationships with each other and university staff and faculty members. This recommendation is important as it stresses the importance for students to get together socially and academically, particularly if Alaska Native students live in Alaska and attend graduate school out of state, which is usually the case.

A participant stated, "Take advantage of existing social networks and link concurrent Alaskan Native PhD students to one or more existing social networks. That network, then, will last a lifetime for the participants." The importance of cohorts and their communication with each other in graduate programs was a popular suggestion. Cohort models are effective for keeping each other motivated and on track too. Provide opportunities for faculty and students to meet in informal as well as formal settings. These informal events - receptions before presentations or conferences or events help create a sense of community.

PhD participants suggest universities use social media and technology to support this new generation of Indigenous graduate students. It was also suggested to have more technology supports such as Listservs with email contacts, Moodle for courses and social support, gatherings, particular if it is a distance program, and financial support. Other suggestions



included having cohorts with other Indigenous groups too. Suggestions included supporting AISES and Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) and even setting up booths or displays to present. There are thousands of role models and mentors at annual national conferences.

#### **7.4.4 Recommendation Four: Provide academic support**

Alaska Native PhD graduates shared advice on how to provide academic supports to Alaska Native PhD students. One PhD suggested hiring tutors, either one-on-one or small groups or challenging courses in mathematics. Another PhD graduate thought the universities should provide writing support.

Participants gave examples of writing supports, writing mentors, writing groups and tutors as some examples. They also suggested more technology support for the future students, which is a tool that helps their studies and research project. If there is writing support, it will also greatly help the graduate students' committee members. Committee members' time is valuable and they often are not compensated adequately when serving on PhD committees. Some serve on many graduate committees, adding on to their already busy teaching load.

#### **7.4.5 Recommendation Five: Provide mentorship support**

Alaska Native PhDs had many suggestions for institutions to support Alaska Native PhD students through mentorship programs. Almost half of the PhDs provided input on developing mentorships, as well as examples of effective mentorship programs already in place. Alaska Native PhD scholars advised to increase mentorship programs and cohorts. One participant made an important point regarding the fit of mentorships by stating, "I think it is important that they have academic advisors who are a good fit to the student and who enjoy mentoring students."

There were suggestions on how to implement successful mentorships. The suggestions included having a strong presence of mentorships and having the students and mentors make a commitment to each other and to have mentorships be part of professor's service work or workloads. Some specific ways to create successful mentorship programs are having writing groups, physical meeting places on campuses, and good matches of mentor to students, to name a few. A worthy point to consider regarding Alaska Native graduate student mentorships was made by a PhD participant stating, "Assign a faculty member with relevant expertise who is also committed to student mentoring. Facilitating student support groups also goes a long way toward retention and ultimate success. Another important point made is to make sure the two are a good match. It is also important to meet regularly and be consistent with meetings.

The PhD completers gave a few examples of thriving mentorship programs. One example given was a Māori model The PhD stated: "The Māori and Indigenous model (MAI) used in New Zealand is great; once a month on Saturday morning sessions that feature notable scholars and provide a place for students to workshop their writing and theory is useful."

Another participant suggested, "Connect Native students virtually to other communities of Native scholars like [Alaska university professor] has done at [Alaska university]." Another PhD echoed that sentiment by mentioning the effectiveness of University of Alaska Fairbanks' Center for Cross-Cultural Studies program for mentoring college students. This is similar to what another PhD discussed regarding the significance of "academic mentors or multicultural centers that students can access."

A noteworthy comment was made by a PhD on the commitment it takes to be a mentor and stated the following:

I offer this one with a proviso. It's best when Native professors can help show the way for graduate students but--and this is important-- these professors often get so overburdened with this exact responsibility that it causes difficulty for them. It takes a lot of time and love and energy to truly support our Native community and this work tends not to be valued when it comes to retention and tenure decisions, so faculty should be rewarded and recognized for these efforts.

#### **7.4.6 Recommendation Six: Increase or create financial support with scholarship or internships**

Several PhD survey participants commented on the challenge of working and going to school. If universities want to increase and retain Alaska Native students, they should provide some financial support as well, as the data showed very little came from Native corporations and most students were full time students with 75%-100% of their PhD program funded by the universities. It was mentioned as tuition rises, the price of graduate programs also increased so scholarships should also increase.

#### **7.4.7 Recommendation Seven: Think out of the box: Innovative ways universities can support Alaska Native graduate students**

The Alaska Native PhDs provided a few other suggestions for institutions to support their Alaska Native graduate students. One thought expressed for universities or educational entities supporting Alaska Native graduate students is as follows:

Pay for them to go home occasionally. I was horribly homesick and lonely...I really needed to be able to go home at least once a year to pick berries, fish, feel a connection again. I feel like I lost a lot of valuable time that I could have been carrying on traditions

like subsistence hunting and fishing because I had to choose between a PhD and going home for learning. Actually, that is something I think the Native tribes should be doing.

Issues related to geography were a large, unique challenge for many Alaska Native PhDs. Efforts to remove that barrier must take place. A recommendation, or creative solution that can address the geographical barriers is the creation of more online or distance education programs. In order to increase Alaska Native graduate student enrollment numbers, the geographical barrier issue of time and distance, lack of options, and expense of doctoral programs need some major attention. Alaska has quality Internet access throughout the state, even in remote locations. Another recommendation is to recruit with more personalization. Rather than just sitting at booths at career fairs, recruiters should give presentations. Why not share graduate programs at the high school level? It would be beneficial to have more onsite recruitment for graduate programs when visiting schools.

Another recommendation was to provide professional development or educational travel opportunities, perhaps allowing student regional groups to travel to universities or have extensive media or movie sessions to learn about programs. Perhaps colleges can go a step further than a college fair and have a more personalized approach with college bound students at high schools in Alaska. Rather than the competitive booths of a college fair, the recruiting advisors should visit schools and have a Question and Answer, along with a video presentation of the schools. If they can get an interview from an Alaska Native student who attended their college, that testimony would be good.

Another recommendation is to provide rural schools support with more funding to allow for more depth and breadth of curriculum in their local schools. Given the advances with technology, beefing up Alaska's technology programs using technology as a tool for accessing

curriculum would benefit the rigor and depth and breadth of curriculum for Alaska Native students, particularly ones that are off the road system or in rural communities.

Sixty seven percent were first inspired to pursue a PhD degree in undergraduate or graduate school. A recommendation would be to have universities recruit heavily in undergraduate and graduate school. Universities can encourage faculty and advisors to recruit their Alaska Native students, as they were influential with Alaska Native PhD graduates.

One PhD mentioned the importance of encouraging and building relationships with faculty at universities other than their own. A model to emulate is a University of Alaska graduate course that cross-pollinates with other Indigenous Studies university programs such as an Alaska university that shares a graduate seminar with at least seven other national and institutions. Faculty and students network and share research information via Web meetings, audio conferencing, Voice Thread, and Google Hangouts. Remote forms of mentorship can span the globe and provide a rich source of research information. This is an example of paradigm thinking, where faculty and students share their research and learn from each other, not only academically, but spiritually and culturally too. The course has been such a success, that graduates take the course beyond their degree, for the benefit of the knowledge.

Lastly, some wise advice to universities from Alaska Native PhDs was to create the mentorships early and have pre-doctoral program symposiums to inform the graduate students of their program and expectations throughout their program. Dr. Perea served as a mentor for me from afar, as others have. She gave me permission to use her published Alaska Native PhD table at the start of my research. Appendix P is her permission to use her publication, which is the original Appendix A.

Find other innovative ways universities could support Alaska Native PhD students. One Alaska Native PhD supported thinking outside of the box by recommending, “Get the word out sooner (Recruit before PhD graduate school).” In other words, everyone should recruit. The success of an Alaska university’s doctoral enrollment of Alaska Native applicant originated from a PhD doctor’s grassroots effort with reaching out to all Alaska Native master’s degree students as he kept encouraging them to apply for their PhD program, even without him knowing them. He pounded the pavement at state and national conferences, so to speak.

Another effort was from an Alaska Native leader, Lieutenant Byron Mallott, who stated: We should have an educational system that is the best in the land for ‘US’... In terms of research analysis and in terms of looking over the horizon and asking questions and posing opportunity that no other institution is capable of doing... (2013)

In alignment with Alaska’s Tlingit political leader and with the sentiments from numerous Alaska Native PhD graduates, it is important for universities, Native leaders, and agencies to get more students interested in graduate school and a doctorate degree. Increased involvement of Alaska Native PhDs and others must work together increase the numbers of Alaska Native PhD students and graduates.

### **7.5 Recommendations for Future Research**

Maher et al. mentioned an attrition rate of 50% in many doctoral programs (2004, p. 386). It would be beneficial to study Alaska Native PhD students who have not finished their degree and gather information on why they did not finish a PhD degree they started? It would also be noteworthy to find out why Alaska Native master’s degree graduates have not pursued a PhD. Is it financial reasons, the time involved, the geographic barrier to attain a degree, or the lack of finding a passionate degree field and topic of interest?

A participant questioned the value of spirituality, as he was an anthropologist and felt that religions were introduced to Alaska during colonization. It would be a thought provoking study to find out more about Indigenous spirituality and the various religions we have in our state that are an important part of many of our people. Cultural identity was significant across the responses of the study participants. Does spirituality play a bigger part than I discovered? Dr. Kawagley frequently discussed the importance of the spiritual realm component of his tetrahedral. A study of this type would be valuable to explore further.

This study could have had more questions addressing the topic of cultural identity, although it was mentioned throughout the research. Cultural identity is a positive support that would be worth further investigation for Alaska Native students and universities seeking to better support and graduate Alaska Native students. As public schools are also seeking to increase Native student success, perhaps this would be an area for them to explore further.

Some areas that I did not address in my data collection, that were an important part of the Maher et al. (2004) study were: (a) productive research experiences and lots of relevant, useful coursework; (b) taking up a special class or linking with a mentor; (c) having a great dissertation opportunity; and (d) being well prepared to conduct a dissertation. I do not think these would have been key findings in my results. However, one area that would have been good for me to address would be asking if the Alaska Native PhD graduates felt they were well prepared to conduct a dissertation study. An area that I asked about was specifically mentorships, which was important to many participants in my study.

I focused on the extensive data collection for first hand testimony of living Alaska Native PhD graduates. I could have spent more time on my review of the literature, which would also give me more comparison studies.

Another extension of this study would be not researching and analyzing the “all but dissertation” (ABD) subgroup population and looking into why they did not finish their terminal degree. That data could strengthen the challenges and barriers section of this research, as it would help to better understand what supports they needed, but lacked, to finish their degree.

It would also be interesting to track and record other Alaska Native doctoral degree holders, such as dentist, lawyers, and medical doctors. Do these doctorates share similar data responses, qualities, and advice for the next generation of Alaska Native doctorates?

Gillingham et al. (1991) mainly gave me ideas for future research regarding Alaska Native PhDs that do not finish their program. I did not look for a correlation of ‘time to degree’ (TTD) regarding full and part time status of Alaska Native PhD graduates, as Gillingham et al. (1991) did. This may be something to pursue for future research since there was a range of timeframes for completion ‘time to degree’.

A limitation of this study would be the lack of research on a heterogeneous comparison group or other Indigenous populations regarding the number of PhDs with other subgroups. A project that would contribute to this study would be a cross-cultural comparison of motivational factors leading to successful completion of doctoral degrees among non-Alaska Indigenous groups.

Another potential study would be looking at a longstanding, statistically successful Alaska Native honors program for college bound students (of primarily Alaska Native heritage) from rural communities. Denise Wartes has been the director of the University of Alaska’s successful dual credit program, Alaska’s Rural Alaskan’s Honors Institute (RAHI) for almost thirty years. According to Wartes (personal communication, June 4, 2017), the longstanding, reputable academic program served over 1,700 students, of which most are Alaska Native



students. Over 250 RAHI alumni are presently enrolled in colleges. To date 438 RAHI students completed a baccalaureate degree, 111 students have completed a master's degree, and 20 RAHI alumni have received a doctorate of some type. Four of those are PhD degrees.

This is a good example of a premium group of rural students who were motivated in school with goals of going to college, who had a support system, and who attained a degree within the last thirty years. To get accepted into the RAHI program is a competitive process, with having a minimum GPA of 3.00. Given the pool of successful students and the few doctoral degree completers in the notable program of RAHI, there is a need to promote higher education beyond the bachelor's and master's degrees. This is one of the most successful programs, bringing in Alaska's best, with the potential to recruit doctoral degree students. For future exploration, how many of the RAHI master's degree graduates are interested in a doctoral degree, and if so, what are their barriers to pursue the terminal degree.

It was surprising to note that racism and negative stereotyping of the participants before or during their PhD program was not a greater challenge mentioned by more of the Alaska Native PhD graduates. Negative experiences some participants encountered pushed them to stay focused to meet their goal of attaining a PhD degree. A question I ponder is, "Are there many master's degree holders who experienced racism inside or outside of their institution and did that prevent them to not enter or finish a PhD program?"

As a result of my research and literature review, I recommend graduate institutions create a research boot camp similar to the Sisters of the Academy's (SOTA's) annual boot camp support training, which is primarily focused on supporting African American women seeking a PhD degree. I recommend we bring a team of them to Alaska and lead a workshop on how to support our Alaska Native graduate students at the Alaska Native Studies Conference. They can

share examples and African American female PhD graduates' testimony of how they give support to African American women.

## **7.6 Personal Reflection and Final Thoughts**

From this research project, I realized that support systems are vital to successful PhD attainment for a large majority of the Alaska Native PhD graduates. What I did not realize is that support systems had such a critical role addressing all four of my research questions. My four questions are:

- What sets of factors do Alaska Native PhDs have in common which led to their success?
- What challenges and barriers are specific to the Alaska Native demographics?
- If patterns of successful factors exist, can these factors be replicated to expand Alaska Native participation in PhD or other graduate programs?
- Are there 'lessons learned' in terms of aiding university PhD programs in attracting and graduating Alaska Native students?

I presented the findings regarding three main support systems throughout this extensive study. They all play an important role in graduating Alaska Native PhD graduates. These three support systems of academic (including professors, advisors, and mentors), social, (including peers, loved ones, and family), and financial (university funds, merit-based scholarship, jobs while attending school, and Alaska Native/American Indian affiliated scholarship) were the broad areas from data collected from Alaska Native PhD graduates. The three supports address common factors the participants had. The main supports addressed the challenges and barriers regarding demographics for Alaska Native PhDs. The support systems can and should be replicated to expand and support future Alaska Native graduate students, which are addressed in

this chapter. This chapter also addressed recommendations to aid university programs looking to attract and graduate Alaska Native PhDs.

There may be an assumption or expectation that PhD candidates were ready to have their wings clipped, then research and write on their own. However, the research and writing phase are a critical time for many Alaska Native PhD students to receive various levels and types of supports.

Aspiring Alaska Native graduate students may benefit from positive, encouraging support to push them during the writing and editing phase, as shared by many earned Alaska Native PhDs. Students going into a PhD program are focused with a timeline and routine that appears to be a clear, straight and narrow path in front of them, leading to their PhD degree. However, life happens. Unforeseen situations and events may present themselves along the doctoral journey, and oftentimes not within the institutional setting. Many of the participants commented on the importance of academic, social, financial, and cultural or spiritual supports and a healthy balance that helped them along their journey. Support networks should be a priority when creating or reviewing a successful PhD program.

While this research was specifically focused on Alaska's Indigenous population, it benefits other minority and underrepresented Indigenous populations. From both an individual and institutional perspective, understanding the unique barriers and pathways towards successful PhD attainment by Alaska Natives has broader relevance beyond Alaska Natives and Alaska universities. The expectation is that these research results build upon our understanding of Indigenous education both locally and internationally.

I particularly appreciated Wilson's (2008) words: "If my research doesn't change me as a person, then I haven't done it right" (Wilson, 2008, p. 135). This resonates as I processed the

data, or the interviews and comments in the survey. I did experience some challenges and barriers, similar to some of the participants. I have learned how to effectively implement some support systems for college students that will benefit my role as a professor or advisor. I look forward to sharing these with my colleagues. I have personally emailed or spoke to nearly all of the participants and I feel fortunate to have them as participants in this research project. As I have slowly and methodically worked through this PhD journey, I value all of the PhD graduates I have been in contact with, whether they participated in my study or not. What I have learned I look forward to sharing to benefit and support aspiring Alaska Native graduate students and undergraduate students as well.

I found this PhD dissertation process to be the longest and most challenging experience I have ever had, down to the end when I was converting my paper from an older Word version to a newer version and experienced numerous formatting issues. I see the benefits of starting this doctoral pursuit at potentially a younger age and with a focus on the degree as a full-time student. However, with reading Wilson's work, I understand the benefits of starting the process when I did, while transitioning between education careers. Wilson (2008) stated:

You must therefore, form your own conclusions. Only you can know how the information that is shared, will fit into your context. You must also have faith that all will be as it is meant to be. It is your job to listen, to internalize and to be aware. The conclusions that are right for you will come to you when they are ready... And be willing to change those conclusions as new relationships developed and that allows you a different point of view. (p. 134)

This research project helped me understand challenges and successes of Alaska Native PhD students, by not only what my participants have experienced, but also what I have experienced and gained from this endeavor.

Alaska Native PhD graduates of all degree fields, across the country, including overseas, have made valuable contributions to Alaska Native education with this project. They have given aspiring and current Alaska Native graduate students pragmatic guidance, wisdom, mentorship, and encouragement with the experience and knowledge they have shared.

Support networks and relationships are vital to Alaska Native students at all levels of education, from primary to graduate school levels, whether they be associations with professors, advisors, mentors, peers, or family. We need to be mindful of academic and financial supports to aid them too. When they enter the PhD program door, they are motivated, but they often need supports during their educational journey. That educational journey begins in the classroom early on and continues until their PhD degree attainment.

One of my missions has been to encourage students to take advantage of educational opportunities, regardless of their circumstances and barriers. One of my favorite adages to share with students has always been, “Education is opportunity” (Unknown). I know firsthand, that an undergraduate or graduate degree program can lead to great opportunities in life. The results of this study gave specific firsthand advice and strategies directly from the project participants: Alaska Native PhD graduates. The recommendations hold great value, promise and hope to current and aspiring Alaska Native graduate and PhD students. Many Alaska Native PhDs had a compelling story and/or wisdom to share with Alaska Native PhD students and universities.

One PhD made a statement that resonated with many comments by Alaska Native PhDs and the work they do. She stated, “We need to be self-sustainable. We are strong people. We

have survived many things and we need to be able to take care of our own.” An important theme throughout this research from the participants was being an advocate for us—to make a difference personally, professionally, academically, and culturally (or spiritually) for ourselves and in my case, for our future generation. A statement that I particularly connected with throughout this research endeavor:

If you really want to get the education, get a master’s. However, if you want a job, you get a PhD. The research aspect was secondary. It was something that I did out of a love of this information. I think successful researchers or successful academics, they do it not only because they are passionate about it, but also because they are very competitive. My drive is very internal. I do things for myself. For the PhD it was just practicality. If I wanted to be a professor, which I did, I would have to get PhD.

This PhD participant spoke passionately about work as a professor in their degree field.

From the start of this program I wanted my “Indigenous storywork.” I sought and tried to find connection and none of my thoughts felt authentic to me. Perhaps they were to my ancestors, but not to me.

What I have known, what I enjoy, and what has helped me along my path has always been competitive sports. This PhD journey has been one of the most challenging endeavors, so the sport that immediately came to mind was a marathon running race. I was a sprinter, a jumper, and an athlete who played competitively with many sorts of ball sports, not a marathon runner. I have been on many different distance running teams, from qualifying at state track and field meets every year in my high school days to slow, long distance team races for fun with female basketball teammates. A PhD program is like preparing and running a marathon race. The training leading up to race day is similar to the coursework before the research and writing. The

26.2-mile marathon race would be a metaphor for the writing of the dissertation. The coaches would be my co-chairs, working on my ‘skills’ with the drafts I have edited to improve on my overall performance.

Support vehicles and teammates are helpful during distance races, as are support networks of peers, professors, family, and colleagues, in particular, those who “ran the race”. Races are long and lonely, like the dissertation phase. Having one’s supports along the way, particularly the last few miles are critical. The last 6.2 miles is similar to the editing phase, which was very challenging.

However, during this race my fuel is not “Gu” or Gatorade, but caffeine, tea, and sleep. Like a race and training, rest has been critical. For future PhD candidates, taking care of one’s physical well-being is as important as one’s mental well-being during this most challenging endeavor.

During the last several miles, when my morale and energy was low, my editor, or “the dissertation doula” has been my coach and my positive “support vehicle,” along with my co-chair coaches, my husband, work colleagues, and some “cheering section” peers in my program.

Approaching this study, I was aware of its uniqueness, both as a first-time examination and by having the possibility of attaining data on very close to 100% of the population at the data gathering time period. I would gather firsthand, rich information, personal and professional experiences, and wisdom from Alaska Native scholars who earned their terminal degree from Western institutions, which spanned the past 45 years. Undertaking this research, I felt an added weight of responsibility to ensure the survey could achieve an accurate representation of the personal history, experiences, accomplishments, and lessons learned from these rare Alaska Native educational pioneers. I was extremely aware of the importance of getting this first

snapshot correct and that the interpretations that emerge from this examination would be rooted in the best possible data set.

Scores of Alaska Native PhDs are conducting important work in various influential roles and degree fields. Many are “giving back” and making a difference for our people, both within and outside of Alaska. My great hope is that this research project will benefit Alaska Native students, from early grades through the PhD level of education, as there is a concerted effort to increase educational opportunities, funding, and programs for Alaska Native people.

I appreciate the following statement from an Alaska Native PhD participant:

Keep plugging. When you finish you will have many opportunities you cannot even imagine when are in the middle of your studies. You will be able to do so much good and help others. Remember, if you do not like what you are doing after you have completed your PhD, you can always go back and do what you used to do, but there are doors that only a PhD will allow you to go through.

I found this quote inspiring, as it is an optimistic post PhD perspective with this demanding PhD journey. Just as education creates opportunity, advanced education for Alaska Natives multiplies opportunities to advance both the self and the Indigenous culture for all.



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## Appendix A: Alaska Native Men and Women with Earned Research Doctorates, 2013

By Jessica Bissett Perea, PhD, October 2013

**Bold** = currently works in UA system (or retired from UA system)

^ = previously worked in UA system

+ = currently works

outside of Alaska

× = currently works in Alaska (not in UA system)

\* = deceased

Name (Cultural Affiliation)	Year: Degree, Institution	Field
<b>1. James Simpson (Athabascan)</b>	1970: Ed.D., University of Washington	Education
2. Michael F. Tillman (Tlingit) +	1972: Ph.D., University of Washington	Fisheries Science
3. *William Demmert (Tlingit/Oglala Sioux) +	1973: Ed.D., Harvard University	Education
<b>4. *Louis Jacquot (Tlingit)</b>	1973: Ph.D., University of Oregon	Education
<b>5. *Paul A Goodwin (Iñupiaq)</b>	1979: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Physics
6. Robert D Stearns (Alutiiq) +	1983: Ph.D., Stanford University	Anthropology
7. Elizabeth Parent (Athabascan) +	1984: Ph.D., Stanford University	Education
8. Lora L Johnson (Alutiiq) ×	1984: Ph.D., Brown University	Classics
9. Larri Fredericks (Athabascan) +	1990: Ph.D., University of Calif., Berkeley	Medical Anthropology
<b>10. John Weise (Yup'ik)</b>	1990: Ph.D., University of Oregon	Education
11. Ted Wright (Tlingit) ×	1990: Ph.D., Pennsylvania State	Political Science
12. Dorothy Pender (Iñupiaq) ×	1991: Ph.D., Stanford University	Electrical Engineering
13. Jeanmarie Crumb (Athabascan) ×	1992: Ed.D., University of Southern California	Education
<b>14. *Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley (Yup'ik)</b>	1993: Ph.D., University of British Columbia	Education
15. Brian Wescott (Athabascan/Yup'ik) +	1993: Ph.D., Yale University	American Studies
<b>16. Milo Adkison (Yup'ik)</b>	1994: Ph.D., University of Washington	Fisheries
<b>17. Jeane Breinig (Haida)</b>	1995: Ph.D., University of Washington	English
18. Edna Ahgeak MacLean (Iñupiaq) ×	1995: Ph.D., Stanford University	Linguistics
19. Catherine Swan Reimer (Iñupiaq) +	1995: Ed.D., George Washington University	Education (Counseling)
20. Jay Corwin (Tlingit) +	1995: Ph.D., Florida State University	Modern Languages
<b>21. Dolores Garza (Haida)</b>	1996: Ph.D., University of Delaware	Marine Science
22. Shari Huhndorf (Yup'ik) +	1996: Ph.D., New York University	Comparative Literature
<b>23. Maria Williams (Tlingit)</b>	1996: Ph.D., University of Calif., Los Angeles	Ethnomusicology
<b>24. Gordon Pullar (Alutiiq/Sugpiaq)</b>	1997: Ph.D., The Union Institute	Anthropology
25. Denise Dillard (Iñupiaq) ×	1997: Ph.D., Colorado State University	Counseling Psychology
<b>26. Phyllis Fast (Athabascan)</b>	1998: Ph.D., Harvard University	Anthropology
27. Mary Jeanne Longley (Iñupiaq) ×	1998: Ed.D., Portland State University	Education
28. Joyce Shales (Tlingit) ×	1998: Ph.D., University of British Columbia	Education
29. Bernice Tetpon (Iñupiaq) ×	1998: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Cross-Cultural Education
30. Rosita Worl (Tlingit) × ^	1998: Ph.D., Harvard University	Anthropology
31. *Deanna Panjataaq Kingston (Iñupiaq) +	1999: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Anthropology
<b>32. Kanaqluk George Charles (Yup'ik)</b>	2000: Ph.D., University of Calif., Santa Barbara	Religious Studies
33. Linda Crothers (Athabascan) +	2000: Ph.D., University of Calif., Santa Barbara	Psychology
34. Sven Haakanson, Jr. (Alutiiq) ×	2000: Ph.D., Harvard University	Anthropology
35. Steven Verney (Tsimshian) +	2000: Ph.D., University of Calif., San Diego	Clinical Psychology



36. Kamilla Venner (Athabascan) +	2001: Ph.D., University of New Mexico	Psychology
<b>37. Dalee Sambo Dorough (Iñupiaq)</b>	2002: Ph.D., University of British Columbia	Law
38. Lisa Rey Thomas (Tlingit) +	2004: Ph.D., University of Washington	Clinical Psychology
39. Alexis Buntin (Yup'ik/Aleut) +	2006: Ph.D., University of Calif., Los Angeles	Anthropology
<b>40. Beth Leonard (Athabascan)</b>	2007: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Cross-Cult. Studies
41. Sarah (Hicks) Kastelic (Alutiiq) +	2008: Ph.D., Washington University in St. Louis	Social Work
42. Eve Tuck (Unangan) +	2008: Ph.D., City University of New York	Education
43. Cayenne Nikoosh Carlo (Athabascan) +	2008: Ph.D., University of Calif., San Diego	Neurosciences
44. ^Jordan Paul Lewis (Aleut) +	2009: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Cross-Cultural Community Psychology
45. Kathryn Milligan-Mhyre (Iñupiaq) +	2009: Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison	Microbiology
46. Malia Villegas (Alutiiq/Sugpiaq) +	2010: Ed.D., Harvard University	Education
47. Nancy Jean Furlow (Tlingit) × ^	2010: Ph.D., University of Calif., Santa	Religious Studies
<b>48. Theresa John (Yup'ik)</b>	2010: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies
<b>49. Roy F. Roehl II (Aleut)</b>	2010: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Education & Mathematics
<b>50. April G.L. Counciller (Alutiiq)</b>	2010: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Interdisciplinary
<b>51. Walkie <i>Kumaggaq</i> Charles (Yup'ik)</b>	2011: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Applied Linguistics
52. Jessica Bissett Perea (Athabascan) +	2011: Ph.D., University of Calif., Los Angeles	Musicology
53. Thomas Michael Swensen (Alutiiq) +	2011: Ph.D., University of Calif., Berkeley	Comparative Ethnic Studies
54. Kutraluk J.D. Bolton (Iñupiaq) +	2011: Ph.D., Stanford University	Anthropology
55. Nadia Jackinsky-Horrell (Alutiiq) ×	2012: Ph.D., University of Washington	Art History
56. Alisha Drabek (Alutiiq)x	2012: Ph.D., University of Alaska, Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies
57. Tina Woods (Unangan) ×	2013: Ph.D., University of Alaska (Joint Anchorage/Fairbanks)	Clinical Community Psychology

## Appendix B: Chart of Degree Fields for Alaska Native Earned PhD and EdD Graduates, January 2018

Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) (18 PhDs)	Culturally-Based Anthropology (25 PhDs)	Education and Psychology (24 PhDs)	Arts, Music, History, and Religion (10 PhDs)	English, Languages, and Linguistics (7 PhDs)	Business, Political Science, Law, and Leadership (6 PhDs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fisheries Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael F. Tillman</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Fisheries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milo Adkison</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Marine Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delores Garza</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Medical Anthropology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larri Fredericks</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Math Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roy F. Roehl</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Physics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raymond Carroll</li> <li>• Paul A. Goodwin-D</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Electrical Engineering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dorothy Pender</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Biological Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheryl Ann Denesha Wilga</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Genome Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charla Lambert</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Neurosciences/Molecular Biology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cayenne Nikoosh Carlo</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Microbiology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kathryn Milligan-Mhyre</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Emerging Infectious Diseases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jeremy Gilbreath</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Information Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miranda Belardi-Lewis</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Engineering Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michele Yatchmeneff</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Civil Engineering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matt Calhoun</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Earth and Environmental Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Aarons</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Environmental Sciences Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jacinda Mainord</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anthropology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robert Stearns</li> <li>• Gordon Pullar</li> <li>• Phyllis Fast</li> <li>• Rosita Worl</li> <li>• Deanna Pamiatooq Kingston-D</li> <li>• Sven Haakanson</li> <li>• Alexis Bunten</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Kutraluk J.D. Bolton</li> <li>• Kristen Barnett</li> <li>• Cross-Cultural I Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beth Leonard</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Indigenous Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theresa John</li> <li>• Alisha Drabek</li> <li>• Barbara Qasugiana Amarok</li> <li>• Norma Shorty</li> <li>• Sean Asiqluq Topkok</li> <li>• Pearl Brower</li> <li>• Charleen Fisher (pending)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cultural Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bernice Tetpon-D</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ethnic Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dian Millon</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Anthropology and Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary Grantham Campbell-D</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cross-Cultural Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jordan Paul Lewis</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Interdisciplinary Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April Latkonen-Counciller</li> <li>• Edgar Blatchford</li> <li>• Bernice Joseph-D</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Comparative Ethnic Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thomas Michael Swensen</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• James Simpson</li> <li>• William Demmert-D</li> <li>• Louis Jacquot-D</li> <li>• Elizabeth Parent</li> <li>• John Weise</li> <li>• Jean Marie Crumb</li> <li>• Angoyuqqaq Oscar Kawagley-D</li> <li>• Mary Jean Longley</li> <li>• Joyce Shales</li> <li>• Eve Tuck</li> <li>• Malia Villegas</li> <li>• Leilani Sabzalian</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Special Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connie (Leask) Lambert</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Education Counseling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catherine Swan Reimer</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Developmental Psychology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julia Parrish-Morris</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Counseling Psychology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denise Dillard</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Psychology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linda Crothers</li> <li>• Kamilla Venner</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Clinical Psychology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steven Verney</li> <li>• Lisa Rey Thomas</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Clinical Community Psychology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tina Woods</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Social Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah (Hicks) Kastelic</li> <li>• LaVerne Demientieff</li> <li>• Jessica Black</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lora L. Johnson</li> </ul> </li> <li>• American Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brian Westcott</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ethnomusicology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maria Williams</li> <li>• Heidi Akloseaq Senungetuk</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Religious Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kanaqluk George Charles</li> <li>• Nancy Jean Furlow</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Religion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cara Burnidge</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Musicology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jessica Bissett-Perea</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Art History <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nadia Jackinsky-Sethi</li> <li>• Mique'l Dangeli</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jeane Breinig</li> <li>• Christopher Caskey Russell</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Linguistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edna Ahgeak MacLean</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Applied Linguistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walkie Kumaggaq Charles</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Modern Languages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jay Corwin</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Comparative Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shari Huhndorf</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Language and Communicative Disorder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Darin Woolpert</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ted Wright</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dalee Sambo Dorough</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Organizational Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adelheid Herrmann</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Educational Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steven Leask-D</li> </ul> </li> <li>• School System Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kenneth Samuelson</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Leadership and Change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gail Cheney</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>• D=Deceased</p> <p>• 90 PhDs as of Jan., 2018</p>



## Appendix C: Alaska Native Faculty, 2017

Taken from Affiliated Native Faculty List, Alaska Native Studies Council (ANSC)

(University of Alaska Campuses with self-identified or published information on verified Alaska Natives)

September, 2017, Based on ANSC's updated Alaska Native faculty list

Research was conducted and confirmed with Alaska Native faculty and faculty individuals from all three main University of Alaska's to ensure these numbers are accurate with self identified and published information on the Alaska Native faculty.

<b>University of Alaska Anchorage</b>						
Tenured	Tenure Track	Term	Adjunct*	Visiting Distinguished	Total of tenure, tenure track or term	Total AN faculty
8	3	5	6*	1	16	23
<b>University of Alaska Fairbanks</b>						
2	7	2	3*	n/a	11	14
<b>University of Alaska Southeast</b>						
1	2	1	4*	n/a	4	8

\*Given the number of satellite campus in outlying areas, the number of adjunct faculty is and estimate based on what ANSC knows. There may be more Alaska Native adjunct faculty that teach language and cultural courses.

**Note:** Administrators and American Indian category are not included. The numbers are higher if they were included, as shown in the **UA Report 2106** within the category of "Alaska Native/American Indian."

(<https://www.alaska.edu/swbir/ir/reports/ua-in-review/uar2015/UAR-2016-Final.pdf>)

## Appendix D: Alaska Native Men and Women with Earned Research Doctorates, January 2018

*Original 50 graduates created by Dr. Jessica Bissett Perea, October, 2013*

*Updates after 2013 are maintained by Alberta Jones, Latest: January 10, 2018*

**Bold** = currently works in UA system (or retired from UA system)

^ = previously worked in UA system

+ = currently works outside of Alaska

× = currently works in Alaska (not in UA system)

\* = deceased

Name (Cultural Affiliation)	Year: Degree, Institution	Degree Field
<b>1. James Simpson (Athabascan)</b> ^	1970: Ed.D., University of Washington, WA	Education
2. Michael F. Tillman (Tlingit) +	1972: Ph.D., University of Washington, WA	Fisheries Science
3. Raymond Carroll (Athabascan) +	1972: Ph.D., University of Michigan	Physics
4. *William Demmert (Tlingit/Oglala Sioux)+^	1973: Ed.D., Harvard University, MA	Education
<b>5. *Louis Jacquot (Tlingit)</b> ^	1973: Ph.D., University of Oregon	Education
<b>6. *Paul A Goodwin (Iñupiaq)</b> ^	1979: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Physics
7. Robert D Stearns (Alutiiq) +	1983: Ph.D., Stanford University, CA	Anthropology
8. Elizabeth Parent (Athabascan) +	1984: Ph.D., Stanford University, CA	Education
9. Lora L Johnson (Alutiiq) ×	1984: Ph.D., Brown University, RI	Classics
10. Larri Fredericks (Athabascan) +	1990: Ph.D., University of Calif., Berkeley	Medical Anthropology
<b>11. John Weise (Yup'ik)</b> ^	1990: Ph.D., University of Oregon	Education
12. Ted Wright (Tlingit) ×	1990: Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University	Political Science
13. Dorothy Pender (Iñupiaq) ×	1991: Ph.D., Stanford University, CA	Electrical Engineering
14. Jeanmarie Crumb (Athabascan)×	1992: Ed.D., University of Southern California	Education
<b>15. *Agayuaq Oscar Kawagley (Yup'ik)</b> ^	1993: Ph.D., University of British Columbia CAN	Education
16. Brian Wescott (Athabascan/Yup'ik) +	1993: Ph.D., Yale University, CT	American Studies
<b>17. Milo Adkison (Yup'ik)</b>	1994: Ph.D., University of Washington	Fisheries
<b>18. Jeane Breinig (Haida)</b>	1995: Ph.D., University of Washington	English
19. Edna Ahgeak MacLean (Iñupiaq) ×	1995: Ph.D., Stanford University, CA	Linguistics
20. Catherine Swan Reimer (Iñupiaq) +	1995: Ed.D., George Washington University, DC	Education (Counseling)
21. Jay Corwin (Tlingit) +	1995: Ph.D., Florida State University	Modern Languages
22. Connie (Leask) Lambert + (Tsimshian/Haida)	1995: Ph.D. University of Washington	Special Education
<b>23. Dolores Garza (Haida)</b> ^+	1996: Ph.D., University of Delaware	Marine Science
24. Shari Huhndorf (Yup'ik) +	1996: Ph.D., New York University	Comparative Literature
<b>25. Maria Williams (Tlingit)</b>	1996: Ph.D., University of Calif., Los Angeles	Ethnomusicology
<b>26. Gordon Pullar (Alutiiq)</b> ^ ×	1997: Ph.D., The Union Institute, Ohio	Anthropology
27. Denise Dillard (Iñupiaq) ×	1997: Ph.D., Colorado State University	Counseling Psychology
<b>28. Cheryl Ann Denesha Wilga (Athabascan)</b>	1997: Ph.D., University of Southern Florida	Biological Sciences
<b>29. Phyllis Fast (Athabascan)</b> ^ +	1998: Ph.D., Harvard University, MA	Anthropology
30. Mary Jean Longley (Iñupiaq) +	1998: Ed.D., Portland State University	Education
31. Joyce Shales (Tlingit) ×	1998: Ph.D., University of British Columbia,	Education
32. *Bernice Tetpon (Iñupiaq) × ^	1998: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Cultural Education
33. Rosita Worl (Tlingit) × ^	1998: Ph.D., Harvard University, MA	Anthropology
34. *Deanna Panjataq Kingston (Iñupiaq) +	1999: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Anthropology
<b>35. Kanaqluk George Charles (Yup'ik)</b>	2000: Ph.D., University of Calif., Santa Barbara	Religious Studies
36. Linda Crothers (Athabascan) +	2000: Ph.D., University of Calif., Santa Barbara	Psychology
37. Sven Haakanson, Jr. (Alutiiq) +	2000: Ph.D., Harvard University, MA	Anthropology
38. Steven Verney (Tsimshian) +	2000: Ph.D., University of Calif., San Diego	Clinical Psychology
39. Kamilla Venner (Athabascan) +	2001: Ph.D., University of New Mexico	Psychology
40. Christopher Caskey Russell (Tlingit) +	2001: Ph.D., University of Oregon, Eugene	English
<b>41. Dalee Sambo Dorough (Iñupiaq)</b>	2002: Ph.D., University of British Columbia CAN	Law

42. *Steven Leask+ (Tsimshian/Haida)	2003: Ph.D., New Mexico State University	Educational Administration
43. Lisa Rey Thomas (Tlingit) +	2004: Ph.D., University of Washington, WA	Clinical Psychology
44. Dian Millon (Athabaskan) +	2004: Ph.D., University of Calif. Berkeley	Ethnic Studies
45. *Mary Grantham Campbell (Iñupiaq)	2005: Ph.D. Stanford University, CA	Anthropology and Education
46. Alexis Bunten (Yup'ik/Aleut) +	2006: Ph.D., University of Calif., Los Angeles	Anthropology
<b>47. Beth Leonard (Athabaskan)</b>	2007: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Cross-Cultural Studies
48. Sarah (Hicks) Kastelic (Alutiiq)+	2008: Ph.D., Washington University in St. Louis	Social Work
49. Eve Tuck (Aleut) +	2008: Ph.D., City University of New York	Education
50. Cayenne Nikoosh Carlo (Athabaskan/Tlingit) +	2008: Ph.D., University of Calif., San Diego	Neurosciences/Molecular Biology
51. Charla Lambert + (Tsimshian/Haida)	2008: Ph.D., University of Washington	Genome Sciences
<b>52. Jordan Paul Lewis (Aleut)</b>	2009: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Cross-Cultural Community Psychology
<b>53. Kathryn Milligan-Mhyre (Iñupiaq)</b>	2009: Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison	Microbiology
54. Malia Villegas (Alutiiq)+	2010: Ed.D., Harvard University, MA	Education
55. Nancy Jean Furlow (Tlingit) × ^	2010: Ph.D., University of Calif., Santa Barbara	Religious Studies
<b>56. Theresa John (Yup'ik)</b>	2010: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies
<b>57. Roy F. Roehl II (Aleut) ^×</b>	2010: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Education & Mathematics
<b>58. April G.L. Counciller (Alutiiq) ^×</b>	2010: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Interdisciplinary Studies
<b>59. Walkie Kumaggaq Charles (Yup'ik)</b>	2011: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Applied Linguistics
60. Jessica Bissett Perea (Athabaskan) +	2011: Ph.D., University of Calif., Los Angeles	Musicology
61. Thomas Michael Swensen (Alutiiq) +	2011: Ph.D., University of Calif., Berkeley	Comparative Ethnic Studies
62. Kutraluk J.D. Bolton (Iñupiaq) +	2011: Ph.D., Stanford University, CA	Anthropology
63. Kenneth Samuelson (Tsimshian/Tlingit/Yup'ik)+	2011: Ed.D., East Tennessee State U., TN	School System Leadership
64. Julia Parish-Morris (Tlingit) +	2011: Temple University, Pennsylvania	Developmental Psychology
65. Nadia Jackinsky-Sethi (Alutiiq) ×	2012: Ph.D., University of Washington, WA	Art History
66. Alisha Drabek (Alutiiq)×	2012: Ph.D., University of Alaska, Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies
67. Darin Woolpert (Alutiiq)+	2012: Ph.D., Loma Linda University, CA	Language & Communicative Disorders
68. Tina Woods (Aleut) ×	2013: Ph.D., University of Alaska (Joint Anchorage-Fairbanks)	Clinical Community Psychology
69. Adelheid Herrmann (Athabaskan) ×	2013: Ed.D., University of LaVerne, CA	Organizational Leadership
70. Jeremy Gilbreath (Aleut)+	2013: Ph.D., Uniformed Services University, MD	Emerging Infectious Diseases
71. Miranda Belardi-Lewis (Tlingit/Zuni) +	2013: Ph.D., University of Washington, WA	Information Science
<b>72. Edgar Blatchford (Iñupiaq)</b>	2013: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Interdisciplinary Studies
73. Cara Burnidge+ (Aleut)	2013: Ph.D., Florida State University	Religion
<b>74. Gail Cheney (Haida/Tlingit)</b>	2014: Ph.D., Antioch University, WA	Leadership and Change
75. Barb <i>QasuGlana</i> Amarok (Iñupiaq)× ^	2015: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies
<b>76. Mique'l Dangeli (Tsimshian,Tlingit)</b>	2015: Ph.D., University of British Columbia CAN	Art History
77. Norma Shorty × (Tlingit)	2015: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies
<b>78. Sean Asiqluq Topkok (Inupiaq/Sami)</b>	2015: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies
<b>79. Michele Yatchmeneff (Aleut)</b>	2015: Ph.D., Purdue University, IN	Engineering Education
<b>80. Matt Calhoun (Athabaskan)</b>	2015: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Civil Engineering
81. Leilani Sabzalian + (Alutiiq)	2015: Ph.D., University of Oregon, Eugene	Education
82. Kristen Barnett (Yup'ik) +	2015: Ph.D. University of Montana	Anthropology
83. Pearl <i>Kiyawn</i> Brower (Iñupiaq) ×	2016: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies
84. Sarah Aarons (Iñupiaq)+	2016: Ph.D., University of Michigan	Earth & Environmental
<b>85. *Bernice Joseph (Athabaskan) ^</b>	2017: Ph.D., University of Australia Adelaide	Interdisciplinary Studies
86. Heidi Aklaseaq Senungetuk (Iñupiaq) ×	2017: Ph.D., Wesleyan University, CT	Ethnomusicology
87. Jacinda Mainord (Iñupiaq) +	2017: Ph.D., Portland State University, Oregon	Earth, Environment, & Society

<b>88. LaVerne Demientieff (Athabascan)</b>	2017: Ph. D., University of Utah	Social Work
<b>89. Jessica Black (Athabascan)</b>	2017: St. Louis University, MO	Social Work
90. Charleen Fisher (Athabascan) ×(pending)	2018: Ph.D., University of Alaska Fairbanks	Indigenous Studies

## Appendix E: IRB Exemption Letter

(907) 474-7800  
(907) 474-5444 fax  
uaf-irb@alaska.edu  
www.uaf.edu/irb



### Institutional Review Board

909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

April 10, 2014

To: Amy Vinlove, PhD  
Principal  
Investigator

From: University of Alaska Fairbanks IRB

Re: [561488-2] An Examination of Factors Influencing Motivation and Success of  
Alaska Native PhD Graduates: A Mixed Methods Study

Thank you for submitting the Response/Follow-Up referenced below. The submission was handled by Expedited Review under the requirements of 45 CFR 46.110, which identifies the categories of research eligible for expedited review.

Title:	An Examination of Factors Influencing Motivation and Success of Alaska Native PhD Graduates: A Mixed Methods Study
Received:	April 4, 2014
Expedited Category:	7
Action:	APPROVED
Effective Date:	April 10, 2014
Expiration Date:	April 10, 2015

This action is included on the May 7, 2014 IRB Agenda.

*No changes may be made to this project without the prior review and approval of the IRB. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in research scope, research tools, consent documents, personnel, or record storage location.*

## Appendix F: Informed Consent Form for Survey Participants

### Informed Consent Form for Survey Participants

**Project Title: An Examination of Factors Influencing Motivation and Success of Alaska Native PhD/EdD Graduates: A Mixed Methods Study**

IRB# 561488-2

Date Approved: 4/10/2014

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

My name is Alberta Jones and I am a doctoral student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). I am completing research entitled, "An Examination of Factors Influencing Motivation and Success of Alaska Native PhD/EdD Graduates: An Ethnographic, Mixed Methods Study" as part of an Indigenous Studies doctoral program in the Research emphasis strand of the UAF graduate program. I am working under the guidance of Dr. Ray Barnhardt (Chair, Cross Cultural Studies Department), Dr. Beth Leonard (Advisor, Cross Cultural Studies Department), Dr. Amy Vinlove (Committee member and current research course professor, School of Education), and Dr. Roy Roehl (Committee member, School of Education) at UAF.

You are being asked to take part in a research study about motivational factors that contribute to the successful completion of your doctoral degree. Your voice is an important part of this study, as there is not a large pool of Alaska Native scholars who have completed their doctoral degree. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey.

You are being asked to complete this survey as part of a research study about what factors influenced your successful completion of your doctoral degree. Some of my specific research questions for you are: What factors or sets of factors do these Alaska Native PhDs/EdDs have in common which led to their success? What variables contribute to their successes? What challenges and barriers are unique to the Alaska Native demographics? If patterns of successful factors exist, can these factors be replicated to expand Alaska Native participation in PhD/EdD programs? Are there 'lessons learned' in terms of adding University PhD/EdD programs to attract and graduate Alaska Native PhD students?

The goal of this study is to get a more precise understanding of contributing factors and variables of all Indigenous graduates, particularly Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates. Another goal is to increase the number of Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates. The results of my study will contribute to the understanding of the underrepresented population of Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates. This study will likely inform future efforts to advocate and provide support for Alaska Native graduates and scholars in their pursuit of PhDs/EdDs. You are being asked to take part in this survey because you are an Alaska Native doctoral graduate. Please read this consent form before completing the survey.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

I don't foresee any risks if you choose to participate in my study. Your identity will not be connected to your survey responses. However, your information you choose to share will be insightful and it will greatly contribute to my study.

There are also no direct benefits to you for agreeing to participate in the discussion, although **upon completion of the survey, your e-mail address will automatically be entered into a drawing for a \$50 gift certificate to Amazon.com.** Your responses are a critical piece in sharing the successes, support networks, challenges, and motivational factors for Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates.

#### **Voluntary nature of the Study:**

Your decision to complete the survey is voluntary. You are free to choose whether or not to take part in the study. If you decide to complete the survey you can stop at any time or change your mind and ask to have your responses removed from the data. No matter what you decide, now or later, nothing will happen to you as a result.

Contacts and questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the UAF Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (toll-free outside the Fairbanks area) or [fyirb.edu](http://fyirb.edu).

**Statement of Consent:**

I understand the procedures described above. By pressing the AGREE button below, I agree to participate in this study.

**AGREE**

## Appendix G: Survey Monkey Letter to Participants

Hello PhD/EdD graduate,

I am hoping you would be willing to participate in a survey regarding your PhD/EdD degree.

I am conducting research for my PhD dissertation research topic is entitled, *Alaska Native Scholars: A Mixed-Methods Investigation of Factors Influencing Ph.D. Attainment*. I will examine what motivated and contributed to the success of the statistically small number of Alaska Native doctoral graduates. My research topic will discover and examine what factors have led to successful completion of their program.

If you could take approximately 28-40 minutes from your busy schedule to complete the survey at the link below, your experiences are a vital component of my study.

Two survey participants will be chosen at random to receive a \$75 gift card from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). **The survey link will close on Monday, Nov. 3.**

**You can click on the link below to take the survey:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XXXX>

Your participation is GREATLY appreciated!

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Alberta Jones at the UAS School of Education ([alberta.jones@uas.alaska.edu](mailto:alberta.jones@uas.alaska.edu))

Respectfully,

Alberta Jones  
(Tsimshian/Alutiiq)



## Appendix H: Graduate Survey Instrument

### Survey information and informed consent

You are being asked to complete this survey as part of a research study about what factors influenced your successful completion of your doctoral degree. My specific research questions are: What factors or sets of factors do these Alaska Native PhDs/EdDs have in common which led to their success? What variables contribute to their successes? What challenges and barriers are unique to the Alaska Native demographics? If patterns of successful factors exist, can these factors be replicated to expand Alaska Native participation in PhD/EdD programs? Are there 'lessons learned' in terms of adding University PhD/EdD programs to attract and graduate Alaska Native PhD students?

The goal of this study is to get a more precise understanding of contributing factors and variables of all Indigenous graduates, particularly Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates, from their perspective. Another goal is to increase the number of Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates. The results of my study will contribute to the understanding of the underrepresented population of Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates. This study will likely inform future efforts to advocate and provide support for Alaska Native graduates and scholars in their pursuit of PhDs/EdDs. You are being asked to take part in this survey because you are an Alaska Native doctoral graduate. There are currently approximately 65-70 AN PhD/EdD graduates.

Please read this consent form before completing the survey.

#### RISKS AND BENEFITS OF BEING IN THE STUDY:

The risks to you if you take part in this study are minimal as your identity will not be connected to your survey responses. However, your information you choose to share will be insightful and it will greatly contribute to my study. There are no direct benefits to you for agreeing to participate in the discussion, although upon completion of the survey, you will be given the option to enter your e-mail address for TWO drawings for \$75 gift certificates to Amazon.com. Your responses are a critical piece in sharing the successes, support networks, challenges, and motivational factors for Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY:

The data derived from this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications but your responses will not be associated with your name and all survey data will be aggregated when presented.

#### VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:

Your decision to complete the survey is voluntary. You are free to choose whether or not to take part in the study. If you decide to complete the survey you can stop at any time or change your mind and ask to have your responses removed from the data. No matter what you decide, nothing will happen to you as a result.

#### CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS:

If you have questions about the survey or the study, please contact me at [alberta.jones@uas.alaska.edu](mailto:alberta.jones@uas.alaska.edu) or call me at (907)796-6481. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the UAF Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (toll-free outside the Fairbanks area) or [fyirb@uaf.edu](mailto:fyirb@uaf.edu).

#### **\*1. STATEMENT OF CONSENT:**

**I understand the procedures described above. By pressing the AGREE button below, I agree to participate in this study. Choosing NO THANKS will exit you from the survey.**

☐ Agree

☐ No, thanks

## Navigating the survey

Here are some helpful tips when completing the survey:

- You can complete part of the survey and then come back to it later
- You can preview the survey by responding to the questions quickly, and then you can go back and change your responses before you submit the survey
- There are some short answer questions that "force" a response, but if you want to skip them, you can just put some characters in the text box and the survey will allow you to move
- Several questions allow for narrative responses to add more detail or explanation. It is optional to provide that detail.

## Motivational factors leading toward attainment of a PhD/EdD degree

The following section relates to your motivation during your educational journey.

Some definitions below may help with clarifying some of the questions:

Intrinsic motivation: Internal psychic or spiritual satisfaction. Motivates you from within. This can include the spiritual, emotional, and cultural influences.

Extrinsic motivation: The public, external attractions of a career. Money, prestige, and power are a few examples.

Success: 'Success' comes in many forms and doesn't strictly have to be in the world of academia. For the purpose of my study, I am referring to students who attained their doctoral degree, although, that is not the only means of student success for Alaska Natives.

There will often be a brief section to add narrative information, but it is not required.

### 2. Were you a motivated student in your elementary K-5 education experience?

☐ Slightly motivated    ☐ Somewhat motivated    ☐ Quite motivated    ☐ Extremely motivated

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.

### 3. Were you a motivated student in your middle school or junior high education experience?

☐ Slightly motivated    ☐ Somewhat motivated    ☐ Quite motivated    ☐ Extremely motivated

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.

### 4. Were you a motivated student in your high school education experience?

☐ Slightly motivated    ☐ Somewhat motivated    ☐ Quite motivated    ☐ Extremely motivated

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.

### 5. Were you motivated to pursue your undergraduate and masters degree?

☐ Slightly motivated    ☐ Somewhat motivated    ☐ Quite motivated    ☐ Extremely motivated

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.

## Motivational factors leading toward attainment of a PhD/EdD degree (p.2)

### 6. Were you a motivated student when pursuing your doctoral degree?

- ☐ Slightly motivated    ☐ Somewhat motivated    ☐ Quite motivated    ☐ Extremely motivated

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.

### 7. What intrinsically (from within) motivated you to pursue your PhD/EdD degree? (You can choose multiple answers)

- ☐ Intellectual topic interest  
☐ Cultural knowledge connection/interest  
☐ Spiritual connection/interest  
☐ Academic goal of a a doctoral degree  
☐ Personal goal of a doctoral degree  
☐ Professional goal of a doctoral degree  
☐ Other

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.

### 8. When was your first memory of aspiring to become a Phd/EdD?

- ☐ Elementary school  
☐ Middle school  
☐ High school  
☐ Undergraduate school  
☐ Graduate school  
☐ If other, please briefly share.

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.

**Motivational factors leading toward attainment of a PhD/EdD degree (p.3)**

**9. Who influenced you to pursue your doctoral degree?**

**(You can choose multiple answers)**

- ☐ Self
- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Stepmother
- ☐ Stepfather
- ☐ Guardian
- ☐ Spouse
- ☐ Children
- ☐ Grandparent
- ☐ Siblings
- ☐ Aunties or uncles
- ☐ Family Friend(s)
- ☐ Religious leader
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Coach
- ☐ Counselor
- ☐ Work colleagues
- ☐ Boss
- ☐ University faculty/staff member(s)

Other (please briefly specify)

**10. Did you consider yourself as having strong cultural identity when you pursued your PhD/EdD degree? (Cultural identity: Belonging to or being a part of your ethnic group)**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ It became stronger during my PhD program

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.

**11. What were your extrinsic motivational factors for earning your PhD/EdD degree? Extrinsic motivation-The public, external attractions of a career. Money, prestige, and power are a few examples.**

**(You can choose multiple answers)**

- ☐ None of the extrinsic factors motivated me
- ☐ Job opportunities
- ☐ Career advancement in my field or workplace
- ☐ Financial gains
- ☐ To create other unknown opportunities
- ☐ To become a college professor
- ☐ To become a doctoral researcher, scientist, anthropologist, linguist, etc.

Other (feel free to briefly state your extrinsic motivators)

## Motivational factors leading toward attainment of a PhD/EdD degree (p.4)

### 12. Was there a pivotal point, where you were most motivated during your PhD/EdD program?

(You can choose multiple answers)

- ☐ I wasn't very motivated in my program as it was a challenge the entire journey
- ☐ I was most motivated in the beginning of my program
- ☐ I was most motivated in the middle of my program
- ☐ I was most motivated toward the end of my program
- ☐ I was always motivated in my program

Other (Briefly explain if other)

### 13. How well did your professors motivate you in your PhD/EdD program?

- ☐ Not at all well      ☐ Slightly well      ☐ Quite well      ☐ Extremely well

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.

### 14. How well did your academic advisor(s) motivate you in your PhD/EdD program?

- ☐ Not at all well      ☐ Slightly well      ☐ Quite well      ☐ Extremely well

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.

### 15. How well did your peer(s) motivate you in your PhD/EdD program?

- ☐ Not at all well      ☐ Slightly well      ☐ Quite well      ☐ Extremely well

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.

**16. Were your cultural connections and identity supporting factors prior and during your PhD/EdD program?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat

Feel free to briefly discuss if you would like to.





## Support networks and mentors during PhD/EdD journey (p.1)

The next set of questions are related to support networks and mentor support that have contributed to your PhD/EdD completion. Choose the response(s) that best reflect your support network(s) and mentor(s).

Some definitions below may help clarify the questions.

SOCIAL SUPPORT: The moral support and social emotional support you have had.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT: Support helping and encouraging you regarding your content in the program.

MENTOR: An experienced or trusted advisor

There will often be a brief section to add narrative information, but it is not required.

### 17. How important of a role did a mentor or mentors play during your PhD/EdD program?

- ☐ Mentors were not a part of my PhD/EdD program
- ☐ Not at all important
- ☐ Slightly important
- ☐ Quite important
- ☐ Extremely important

Other (Briefly explain if other)

### 18. How frequently did you receive support from your mentor(s)?

(You can choose multiple responses)

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Daily onsite
- ☐ Daily remote
- ☐ Weekly onsite
- ☐ Weekly remote
- ☐ Monthly onsite
- ☐ Monthly remote
- ☐ Once a semester onsite
- ☐ Once a semester remote

If multiple responses, explain briefly

**19. Did you use an Alaska Native/American Indian SOCIAL SUPPORT network or program in your PhD/EdD journey?**

☐ Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Fairly often ☐ Very often

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

**20. Did you use an Alaska Native/American Indian ACADEMIC SUPPORT network or program in your PhD/EdD journey?**

☐ Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Fairly often ☐ Very often

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

**21. What support networks did you have that helped you attain your degree?  
(You can choose multiple answers)**

- ☐ Committee Chair/Advisor
- ☐ Committee Member(s)
- ☐ Graduate Faculty
- ☐ Graduate Colleagues
- ☐ Other Faculty
- ☐ Spouse member
- ☐ Family
- ☐ An Alaska Native/American Indian club
- ☐ Work colleagues
- ☐ Work boss
- ☐ Friend
- ☐ Elder
- ☐ Mentor
- ☐ Religious figure
- ☐ Native corporation or tribal agency
- ☐ Social Network Peers

Share other institutional support networks you may have had.

## Support networks and mentors during PhD/EdD journey (p. 2)

### 22. Did you use social media or technology as communication for social support support in the program?

(You can choose multiple responses)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, if so share how you used technology supports below:
  - ☐ Facebook
  - ☐ Twitter or other social media
  - ☐ Email
  - ☐ Texting
  - ☐ Moodle graduate page
  - ☐ Google docs, Skype, or other videoconferencing
  - ☐ Phone or mobile phone

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

### 23. How often did you have face-to-face social support with your peers?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Fairly often
- ☐ Very often

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

### 24. How often did you have remote (multimedia/network) social support with your peers?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Fairly often
- ☐ Very often

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

### 25. Reflecting on your support networks, how do you feel about the amount of social support you had throughout your program?

- ☐ I had the right amount of social support
- ☐ I had more support than I expected
- ☐ I wish I had more social support

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

**26. Reflecting on your support networks, how do you feel about the amount of academic support you had throughout your program?**

- ☐ I had the right amount of academic support
- ☐ I had more support than I expected
- ☐ I wish I had more academic support

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.



## Financial support during your PhD/EdD program

The following short section asks a few questions about financial support you received.

**27. Did you receive a tuition waiver for you doctoral program? If so, approximately how much of a tuition waiver did you receive?**

- ☐ I did not receive tuition waivers
- ☐ 25%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 75%
- ☐ Nearly 100%
- ☐ 100%

**28. Did an Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) or tribal entity provide you financial assistance?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

**29. Which ANCSA corporation assisted you? If it was other Native entities, please briefly list.**

**(You can choose multiple answers)**

- ☐ None
- ☐ Ahtna, Inc.
- ☐ Aleut Corp.
- ☐ Arctic Slope Regional Corp.
- ☐ Bering Straits Native Corp.
- ☐ Bristol Bay Native Corp.
- ☐ Calista Corporation
- ☐ Chugach Alaska Corp.
- ☐ Cook Inlet Regional, Inc.
- ☐ Doyon, Ltd.
- ☐ Koniag, Inc.
- ☐ NANA Regional Corp.
- ☐ Sealaska Corp.

Other (please specify)

**30. From the total cost of your program, what is the estimated percentage of financial aid assistance you received from Alaska Indian/American Indian (AN/AI) scholarships?**

- ☐ None
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 25%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 75%
- ☐ 100%

**31. From the total cost of your program, what is the estimated percentage of financial aid assistance you received from OTHER scholarships (outside of AN/AI assistance)?**

- ☐ None
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 25%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 75%
- ☐ 100%

## Study strategies during PhD/EdD journey

This section asks questions about your study habits and how you studied most effectively in your doctoral program.

### 32. How did you study best during the coursework part of your program?

- ☐ Alone
- ☐ Small groups
- ☐ Large groups
- ☐ Combination of these

If a combination, which combination?

### 33. How did instructors and or graduate program facilitate your small or large group learning?

(You can choose multiple responses)

- ☐ No small or large group learning was required by instructor or graduate program
- ☐ Scheduled individual or group times with coursework prior to thesis writing-required
- ☐ Scheduled individual or group times with coursework prior to thesis writing-optional
- ☐ Scheduled individual or group times during candidacy-required
- ☐ Scheduled individual or group times during candidacy-optional
- ☐ Small group or partner work created by students during program
- ☐ Large group work created by students during program

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

**34. What environmental strategies worked best for you when studying?**

**(You can choose multiple responses)**

- ☐ Work space on campus
- ☐ Work space at home
- ☐ Work space at work
- ☐ AM studying
- ☐ PM studying
- ☐ Study times varied
- ☐ Studying alone
- ☐ Studying in environment with peer students or family around me

Other (please specify)

**35. What learning strategies or other supports helped you during your coursework and writing?**

**(You can choose multiple responses)**

- ☐ Content tutors
- ☐ Advisor support and check-ins
- ☐ Professor support and check-ins
- ☐ Peer studying
- ☐ Peer encouragement and communication
- ☐ Study groups-content related
- ☐ Study groups-social support
- ☐ Online supports (state below)

If online supports, what type(s)?



## Barriers, challenges and overcoming them

This section addresses challenges and barriers you have encountered during your PhD/EdD journey. It also addresses how you may have overcome obstacles (resilience). You are getting close to finishing the survey!

### 36. Did you have many challenges or barriers on your way?

- ☐ I had many
- ☐ I had some
- ☐ I had very few
- ☐ I had none

### 37. What challenges or barriers did you encounter outside of your university institution that may have hindered your progress or timeline?

(You can choose multiple responses)

- ☐ None
- ☐ Financial circumstances
- ☐ Personal issues
- ☐ Personal illness
- ☐ Significant life event
- ☐ Family responsibilities
- ☐ medical family emergency
- ☐ Cultural adjustment
- ☐ Racism
- ☐ If a response isn't provided, you can add your response here

**38. What challenges or barriers did you encounter within your university institution that hindered your progress or timeline?**

**(You can choose multiple responses)**

- ☐ I had very little challenges or barriers in my program or institution
- ☐ I had a few challenges or barriers in my program or institution
- ☐ I had several challenges and barriers in my program or institution
- ☐ Lack of communication with professors
- ☐ Lack of support from advisors
- ☐ Program was too expensive
- ☐ Content was very challenging
- ☐ Institution was not a good fit
- ☐ Physical location was not ideal

Briefly state other response(s) not listed

### Advice and thoughts to support current and future Alaska Native PhD/EdD stu...

The following section will be an extremely helpful contribution to current and future Alaska Native PhD/EdD students, particularly from you with your experiences along your journey.

**39. Do you have suggestions for Alaska Native students related to support networks they might seek out when entering a PhD/EdD program?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

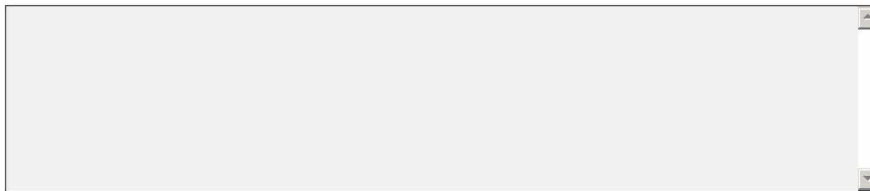
A large, empty text input area with a light gray background and a vertical scrollbar on the right side.

**40. Do you have mentoring suggestions to give to Alaska Native students entering a PhD/EdD program?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

A large, empty text input area with a light gray background and a vertical scrollbar on the right side.

**41. Do you have suggestions for institutions supporting Alaska Native PhD students regarding the support networks they should put in place for these students?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

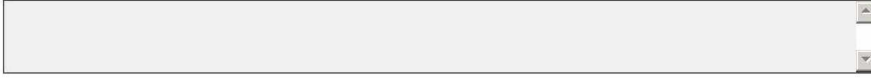
A large, empty text input area with a light gray background and a vertical scrollbar on the right side.

**42. "Do you have suggestions for institutions supporting Alaska Native PhD students regarding mentoring programs they should put in place for these students?"**

☐ No

☐ Yes

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.



## Advice and thoughts to support current and future Alaska Native PhD/EdD stu...

**43. Do you have advice related to studying strategies to current or future Alaska Native PhD/EdD students? If so, you can comment below.**

☐ No

☐ Yes

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

**44. Do you have advice related to overcoming challenges or barriers inside or outside of the university institution to current or future Alaska Native PhD/EdD students?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

**45. Do you have any thoughts on how we can increase our number of Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates if you think that is important?**

☐ No

☐ Yes

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

**46. How has your PhD/EdD degree benefited you today?**

**47. What one or two words come to mind when you think of your doctoral journey process?**

**48. What one or two words come to mind when you think of your doctoral completion?**

## Demographic Information

If you disclose your name in this section, I will not use specific names in my research. I will likely distinguish graduates by region, such as in Alaska, in the northeast, or western coastal region of the United States. I may also use the term ivy league school or small-sized university if it is appropriate with my content. That will be based on how your university describes themselves in size.

This is the last section. It is pretty short!

**49. How many years did it take you to complete your PhD/EdD degree from acceptance into the program to completion? (Example: Fall 2010-Spring 2014=4 years, Fall 2010-Summer 2014=4.5 years--rounding up slightly)**

- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 3.5-5 years
- ☐ 5.5-7 years
- ☐ 7.5-9 years
- ☐ 9.5-11 years
- ☐ More than 11 years

Feel free to share more details on this if you would like to.

**50. What year did you finish your PhD/EdD program?**

**51. At what age range were you when you graduated with your doctoral degree?**

- ☐ 25-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ Over 60 years old

**52. What was your PhD/EdD graduate school and your degree title?**

**53. What was your primary field of research for your doctoral degree?**

**54. What percentage of your program were you a full time doctoral student?**

- ☐ Less than 25%
- ☐ Less than 50%
- ☐ Less than 75%
- ☐ 75%-100%



## Demographics information (p. 2)

### 55. Where did you grow up?

- ☐ In Alaska, in a rural community
- ☐ In Alaska, in an urban community
- ☐ In Alaska, in rural and urban communities
- ☐ Outside of Alaska, in an urban community
- ☐ Outside of Alaska, in a rural or suburban community
- ☐ More than two of these options (Please specify below)

Please specify if more than two options

### 56. What is the highest degree your mother, father, or guardian received?

- ☐ Professional degree (JD, MD, DDS, etc.)
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Certificate program
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ High school degree
- ☐ less than high school degree

### 57. What was your marital status during your PhD/EdD program?

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Living with a companion
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Never married
- ☐ Prefer not to respond

**58. Do you speak an Alaska Native language? If so, at what level?**

- ☐ No, I do not
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Learner of the language
- ☐ Semi-fluently
- ☐ Fluently
- ☐ I speak another language beside Alaska Native languages fluently

Feel free to add more information if you would like to.

## Demographics information (p. 3)

### 59. What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)

- ☐ Aleut
- ☐ Alutiiq
- ☐ Athabascan
- ☐ Cup'ik
- ☐ Haida
- ☐ Eyak
- ☐ Inupiaq
- ☐ Tlingit
- ☐ Tsimshian
- ☐ Yupiaq
- ☐ White / Caucasian
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other-please specify

### 60. What type of K-6 schooling did you have?

- ☐ Public school in home community
- ☐ Public school in community away from home
- ☐ Boarding school in home community
- ☐ Boarding school in community away from home
- ☐ Private School in home community
- ☐ Private school away from home
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**61. What type of 7-12 schooling did you have?**

- ☐ Public school in home community
- ☐ Public school in community away from home
- ☐ Boarding school in home community
- ☐ Boarding school in community away from home
- ☐ Private school in home community
- ☐ Private school away from home
- ☐ Other (please specify)

### Future participation in my research

Following sending my survey to all living Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates, I will be conducting interviews in November and the first half of December. The following question relates to my interview of a variety of 8-12 Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates.

**62. In addition to surveying all living Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates, I will be conducting interviews of eight to twelve individuals in this group in November and the first half of December. Follow up interviews will take place face to face or via audio conference, Google Hangouts or Skype. You will be contacted to set up a mutually agreeable time. Thank you for considering this option!**

**Do you have more thoughts and ideas about these subjects? Would you be willing to participate in an approximately 30-40 minute individual interview on this topic?**

**If you are interested please hit the "yes" button below and enter a contact e-mail address below.**

☐ Yes, I'd like to talk more (I'll type my email contact below)

☐ No, thank you

My email address or phone number:

**63. The list of Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates is continually growing and can be viewed at [http://ankn.uaf.edu/Curriculum/PhD\\_Projects/AKNativePhDs.html](http://ankn.uaf.edu/Curriculum/PhD_Projects/AKNativePhDs.html). I last updated the list in October, 2014.**

**If you know of any other AN PhD or EdD graduates not listed on the above link, please let me know so I can add them to the list and include them in my survey. If you have contact information, please include any information below. Thank you!**

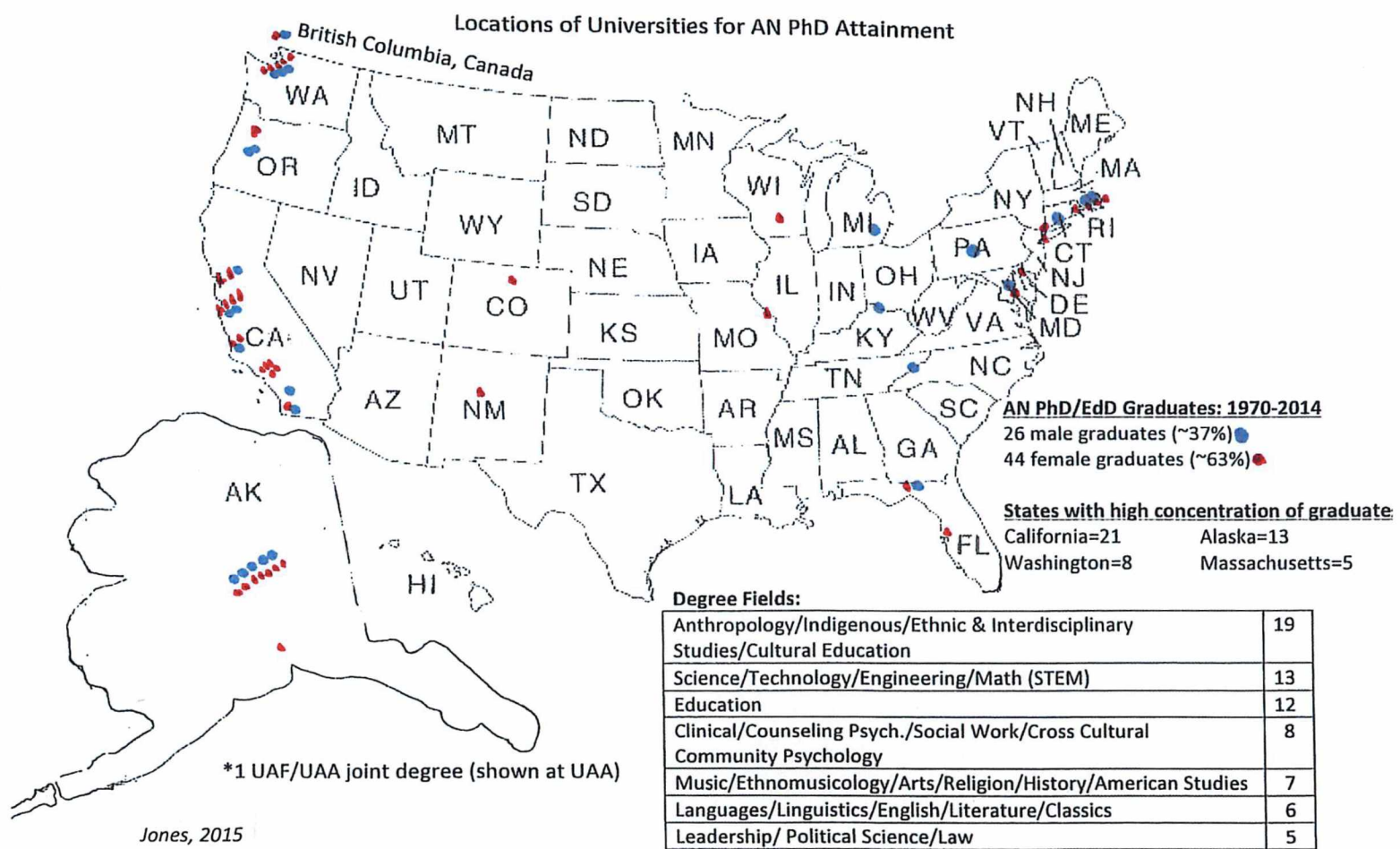
**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO PARTICIPATE IN MY SURVEY**

I greatly appreciate your participation in my research. If you would like to contact me, my email address is [alberta.jones@uas.alaska.edu](mailto:alberta.jones@uas.alaska.edu). I live in Juneau, AK.

**64. YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS MUCH APPRECIATED.**

**OPTIONAL: If you wish to enter my drawings for TWO Amazon.com \$75.00 gift cards as a token of appreciation for participating, please enter your e-mail address below for contact purposes. Random drawings from all entries will be held at the end of the survey collection period. (Beginning November 2014)**

**Your e-mail address and/or identity will not be connected to your survey responses in any way.**



**Appendix J: Map of Alaska Native PhD degree Attainment locations and number of graduates in each state or country, January 2018**





## **Appendix K: Graduate Interview Instrument**

### **PhD/EdD Interview Questions:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I am conducting research for my PhD dissertation research topic is entitled, Alaska Native Scholars: A Mixed-Methods Investigation of Factors Influencing Ph.D. Attainment.

Thank you very much for participating. ☺

#### Doctoral Path:

- 1) For the recording, can you state where you are from, cultural background, where you grew up, cultural ancestry, and your educational history?
- 2) What motivated you to attain a doctoral degree? (This may be a 'who' too)
- 3) Was your decision to pursue a doctoral degree influenced by your Alaska Native cultural background?
- 4) What opportunities has your doctoral degree given you?

#### Process:

- 5) What kind of non-academic support system did you have while working on your doctoral degree (e.g. spouse, children, other family members etc.)?
- 6) What type of academic support systems did you have? (e.g. professor, club, program, etc.)?
- 7) What role did this support system play in your success completing your degree? (You may have answered this above)
- 8) How would you describe your own learning style preferences? Did your graduate studies require that you adopt (or adapt to) learning styles that don't align with your personal preferences?
- 9) What were most helpful strategies or factors that contributed to your successful completion of your doctoral program?

#### Other:

- 10) Were there any questions in the survey that you wanted to discuss or expand upon?
- 11) What advice do you have for universities or the national decision makers to increase and graduate our small number of PhD/EdDs?
- 12) Why do you think it would be important to have more Alaska Native PhD/EdD graduates?

## **Appendix L: Informed Consent Form for Interview Participants**

10/17/2014  
#561488-2

### **Informed Consent Form for Interview Participants**

#### **Alaska Native Scholars: A Mixed-Methods Investigation of Factors Influencing Ph.D. Attainment**

My name is Alberta Jones and I am a doctoral student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). I am completing research entitled, “Alaska Native Scholars: A Mixed-Methods Investigation of Factors Influencing Ph.D. Attainment” as part of an Indigenous Studies doctoral program in the Research emphasis strand of the UAF graduate program. I am working under the guidance of Dr. Ray Barnhardt (Co-chair, Cross Cultural Studies Department, Dr. Amy Vinlove (Co-chair committee member and current research course professor, School of Education), Dr. Beth Leonard (Cross Cultural Studies Department) and Dr. Roy Roehl (Committee member, School of Education) at UAF.

You are being asked to take part in a research project investigating motivational factors that contributed to the successful completion of your doctoral degree. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this personal interview. Congratulations on earning your doctoral degree, as you belong to a currently pretty small population of Alaska Native scholars!

#### **Description of the Study:**

Some of my specific research questions for you are: What factors or sets of factors do these Alaska Native PhDs have in common which led to their success? What variables contribute to their successes? What challenges and barriers are unique to the Alaska Native demographics? If patterns of successful factors exist, can these factors be replicated to expand Alaska Native participation in PhD programs? Are there ‘lessons learned’ in terms of adding University PhD programs to attract and graduate Alaska Native PhD students?

The goal of this study is to get a more precise understanding of contributing factors and variables of all Indigenous graduates, particularly Alaska Native PhD graduates. Another goal is to increase the number of Alaska Native PhD graduates. The results of my study will contribute to the understanding of the underrepresented population of Alaska Native PhD graduates. This study will likely inform future efforts to advocate and provide support for Alaska Native graduates and scholars in their pursuit of PhDs. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are an Alaska Native PhD graduate. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you agree to be in the study.

If you decide to take part, I would interview you individually, via in person, Skype, Google Hangouts, or audio. I may record you with a digital voice recorder. The conversation will take approximately one hour. Please read this form and feel free to ask me any questions related to our interview or my topic.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

I don’t foresee any risks if you choose to participate in my study. Your identity will not be connected to your responses. When transcribing the interviews I will use aliases, and when analyzing and presenting the data I will use aliases and refer to individuals with broad descriptive terms (e.g. “a graduate in the lower 48 or a graduate in urban Alaska”). There are no direct benefits to you for agreeing to participate in the discussion. However, your information you choose to share will be insightful and it will greatly contribute to my study. Your responses are a critical piece in sharing the successes, support networks, challenges, and motivational factors for Alaska Native PhD graduates.

#### **Confidentiality:**

The data derived from this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications but you will not be individually identified. The audio recordings of our discussion will be stored under lock and key at UAF for seven years after the transcription occurs. Raw data needs to be maintained for five years post publication for most journals so that it can be reviewed. The transcriptions will not contain actual names. I am conducting the research at the University of Alaska Fairbanks so it will be available for you and others to view at the Alaska Native Knowledge Network and Center for Cross-Cultural Studies offices on 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Bunnell Building.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You are free to choose whether or not to take part in the study. If you decide to take part in the study you can stop at any time or change your mind and ask to be removed from the study. No matter what you decide, now or later, nothing will happen to you as a result.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have questions now, feel free to ask me now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at alberta.jones@uas.alaska.edu or call me at (907) 796-6481 (work) or 240-381-6426 (cell). Email may be the easiest, as I receive all of my emails and work phone messages immediately on my mobile phone.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the UAF Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (toll-free outside the Fairbanks area) or fyirb@uaf.edu.

**Statement of Consent:**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will grant you permission to record my interview (Please initial if it is permissible)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant & Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent & Date

nsent & Date

Consent & Date

Signature of Person Obtaining

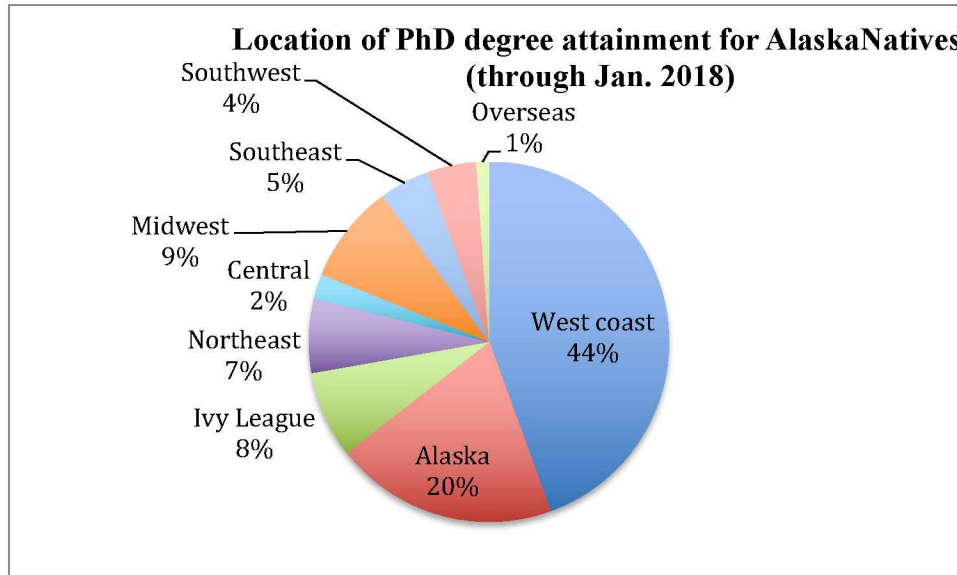
# Appendix M: Color Coding List of Codes with Comment Frequency

Categories of Codes (Does not include codes below ten responses)	Color codes	Number of comments
<b>Pre-Phd Interest and Motivation</b>		
Reason to attain a PhD	■	45
Initial time frame regarding interest for attaining a PhD	■	29
Motivation pre-PhD	■	78
Motivation to pursue a PhD	■	73
Extrinsic motivational factors to attain a PhD	■	23
Motivation-Passion for degree program and research	■	27
<b>Challenges Pre and During</b>		
Challenges and barriers-pre-PhD program	■	25
Low motivation moments-Pre-PhD	■	20
Challenges and barriers-during PhD journey	■	83
Lack of support from institutions or parent/guardians	■	20
<b>Supports and Mentors</b>		
Supports-Academic	■	56
Supports-Cultural	■	29
Supports-Social	■	65
Supports-institutional	■	29
Peer support for motivation	■	29
Influential people contributing to attaining my doctoral degree	■	19
Family support and role during journey	■	10
Mentorships	■	36
Cultural connections during PhD journey	■	27
Cultural identity and influences	■	43
<b>Suggestions and Advice from PhD's</b>		
Advice to overcome challenges outside of the university	■	37
Mentoring suggestions to graduate students	■	41
Study strategy suggestions to graduate students	■	41
Suggestions to graduate students	■	71
Suggestions to universities re: mentoring support for AN graduate students	■	28
Suggestions to universities re: support to AN graduate students	■	58
Suggestion ways to increase PhD graduates	■	41
<b>Benefits, Opportunities, and "Giving Back"</b>		
Benefits and opportunities with a PhD	■	57
Opportunities presented from attaining a PhD	■	30
"Giving back" to community and people	■	41
<b>Words or Phrases Describing PhD Journey and Attainment</b>		
Self-description of PhD attainment	■	59
Self-description of journey	■	55
<b>Quotes to use in Paper</b>		
Free Quote for later	■	77
GREAT quotes	■	95

**Appendix N: Alaska Native PhD Graduates-List of Codes and Associated Groups from ATLAS.ti Generated Report-Codes generated from Surveys and Interviews**

<b>List of Codes and Associated Groups</b>
Background-Rural upbringing
Background-Urban upbringing
Background-Suburban upbringing
Motivation to pursue a PhD Mentorships
Supports-Social
Cultural identity and influences
Family support and role during journey
Supports-Academic
Supports-Financial Learning strategies
Environmental space for studying Participant structure
Supports-institutional Reason to attain a PhD
Challenges and barriers-during PhD journey
Suggestions to graduate students
Suggestions to universities re: support to AN students
Self-description of journey
Self-description of PhD attainment
Demographics of PhD graduates
Parents/guardians high expectations
Background-Rural and urban upbringing
Cultural connections during PhD journey
Parent/guardian education levels
Resilience and overcoming challenges and barriers
Supports-Cultural
Challenges and barriers-pre-PhD program
Motivation pre-PhD
Low motivation moments during PhD journey
Motivation during PhD journey
Competitive nature during PhD
Low motivation moments-Pre-PhD
Competitive nature pre-PhD
Indigenous language speaker
Stereotypes and presumptions-Pre-PhdD
Family Support growing up
Lack of support from institutions or parent/guardians
Motivation for desire to move from home
Unmotivated-Pre-PhD
Probation during undergraduate
Stress high during PhD journey
Benefits and opportunities with a PhD
"Giving back" to community and people
Motivation-Passion for degree program and research
Initial time frame regarding interest for attaining a PhD
Influential people contributing to attaining my doctoral degree

**Appendix O: Distributions of Alaska Native PhD Degree Attainment  
By Geographic Region, January 2018**



Region of PhD degree attainment	90 Alaska Native PhD graduates through January 2018
West coast	40
Alaska	18
Ivy League	7
Northeast	6
Central	2
Midwest	8
Southeast	4
Southwest	4
Overseas	1

Specific locations of PhD degree attainment by region:

West: California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia-Canada

Alaska: Fairbanks and Fairbanks-Anchorage (combined)

Northeast: Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, Delaware, and Washington D.C.

Ivy: Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island

Midwest: Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Missouri, and Wisconsin

Southeast: Florida and Tennessee

Southwest: New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah

Overseas: Australia (Adelaide)

## **Appendix P: Written Permission for use of Publication**

On Jul 11, 2017, at 6:40 AM, Alberta Jones <[a.jones@alaska.edu](mailto:a.jones@alaska.edu)> wrote:  
To: Jessica Bissett Perea  
From: Alberta Jones  
Re: Email request for permission to use your published list in my thesis

Good morning, Dr. Bissett Perea,

May I have permission to use your original 2013 table of AN Earned PhD and Ed's in my thesis?  
I have the revised, 2015 list in my thesis too. I used the 2015 list during my data collection of surveys and interviews.  
Thank you.

Most respectfully,

Alberta

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Alberta J. Jones  
Assistant Professor, Education  
University of Alaska Southeast, Juneau  
Juneau, Alaska  
907.796.6481 (office/msg.)  
Ph.D. Candidate, Indigenous Studies  
University of Alaska Fairbanks

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July 11, 2017 8:32 AM

To: Alberta Jones  
From: Jessica Perea  
Re: Re: Email request for permission to use your published list in my thesis

Good morning Alberta,

I hope you and your family are well. Thank you for your email.  
Yes! Of course you have my permission. Are you filing this summer???

Sincerely,  
Jessica